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IDW's X-FILES CONSPIRACY and ROGUE TROOPER

**DC COMICS
FIVE YEARS LATER**

**INTERVIEW WITH
NEAL ADAMS**

**DARK HORSE
SERENITY**

**VALIANT
UNITY**

**BOOM!
LOKI:
RAGNAROK
AND ROLL**



BCM #8 Introduction by Rich Johnston

Are you fed up of “brand new year” articles yet? I’m not, principally because I’m writing this in late November 2013 and I haven’t read one yet.

2014 is still a glittering possibility for me, rather than the brown, well-trodden snow sludge underfoot that it is for you. Of course, because this is comics, I know what I’ll be reading. That long awaited *Sandman Overture* #2 (well, it will be long awaited by the time you’re reading this), and the launches of *Minimum Wage*, *Rover Red Charlie*, *Deadly Class*, and the revival of *Miracleman*.

So I’m going to make some predictions for the New Year, which are no less valid being made in November than they will be in January.

We’ll see Scott Snyder return to Image Comics. We’ll see Scott Lobdell try. DC will switch around a bunch of creators and start some new titles in April. Marvel will combine all their digital services into one ComiXology-challenging App. DC Comics will launch *Five Years Later* with Free Comic Book Day, take over September with it, and the spin-off weekly titles will be by Brian Azzarello, Jeff Lemire, Keith Giffen, and Dan Jurgens.

And something will tell me there’ll still be no sign of *Phonogram3: Immaterial Girl*. Sigh. Roll on 2015.

C o n t e n t s

002

LIFE IN THE GUTTERS

By Rich Johnston

005

**THE CROSS-MEDIA
TRIUMPH OF
ADVENTURE TIME**

by Hannah Means-Shannon

011

**IDW UNCOVERS
AN X-FILES CONSPIRACY**

by Rich Handley

020

**SMOOTH AS SILK: UNITY
TACKLES THE WEBNET!**

by James Kuhoric

026

THE PULL LIST

by James Kuhoric

031

**ROBOCOP
REMODELED AND REBOOTED**

by Brendon Connelly

036

**JOSS WHEDON’S
WORLD OF COMICS**

by Gavin Lees

043

**DC COMICS’
BIG EVENT FOR 2014**

by Rich Johnston

047

**LOKI RETURNS
TO RAGNAROK AND ROLL**

By Joshua Kopin

052

**2014 – TWELVE
MOVIES IN TWELVE MONTHS**

by Brendon Connelly

058

**NEAL ADAMS
UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL**

by Jeff Spry

067**GOING ROGUE**
by Dan Wickline**072****THE CULT OF THE
DVD COLLECTORS' EDITION**
by Brendon Connelly**075****LOVE AND ROCKETS—
30 YEARS OF LOS
BROS HERNANDEZ**
by Gavin Lees**085****CROSSED 50
ARTIST CHRISTIAN ZANIER**
by James Kuhoric**092****THE BITTER CUP: KIERON
GILLEN'S ÜBER #1/2**
by Keith Davidsen**094****HOT COMICS**
by Rich Johnston**096****PRICE GUIDE**
for Collectors and Sellers**102****BLEEDING COOL DIRECTORY**
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See Page 104 for Details!

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LIFE IN THE GUTTERS

By Rich Johnston



Bleeding Cool Magazine comes out every two months. And it's an enormous effort of manpower, will, caffeine, and sheer bloody mindedness, especially from editor Jim Kuhoric.

The idea of doing it weekly blows my little mind.

Well 2014 is going to be all about weeklies. Over at DC, that is. I talk about the plans for *Five Years Later*, later in this issue but with four weekly books planned for 2014, that's a lot of organised manpower. Maybe it's worth talking to people who grew up working on weekly books, such as *2000AD*'s Pat Mills, Alan Grant, Robbie Morrison, and the like? I hear that Alan Grant's name has, at least been mentioned in the hallowed-and-soon-to-be-shipped-to-the-West-Coast halls of DC Comics. And will an *Earth/Earth 2 War* enliven the summer? What about the return of Damian Wayne? The big changes though, will be in 2015, as DC Comics moves West and, very literally, becomes a different company. What changes will happen to Metropolis and Gotham with their exodus from New York?

Top Cow is also launching a weekly book, *Black Mask* as well. Will consumers get used to coming in every week to follow a title?

Over at Marvel, the big change may be digital, lumping the Marvel Unlimited subscription service, the digital purchase of individual comics, the claiming of digital comics through printed codes, and the Marvel AR experience, all into one multi-platform

Swiss Army Knife or an app, or webpage. Rather than pulling out of ComiXology, they may just make it irrelevant...at least for Marvel comics. Will that happen before or after ComiXology is put up for sale, though, that's the big question.

Wolverine in September is likely to be the publisher's biggest book of the year and we're looking forward to a potential death of the character. He's already been kicked out of The Avengers, could he be kicked out of Marvel comics in totality? And it does look as if we're getting a new Spider-Man. As of writing, we don't know if it's Miles Morales, Miguel O'Hara, or Peter Parker. But don't expect Dan Slott to plump for the obvious. And a new editor will be making his or her mark on the book. But do expect everything to be about *Guardians Of The Galaxy* throughout the year, including a new *Rocket Raccoon* series.

Even as the industry moves more towards digital, *Bleeding Cool Magazine* is staying resolutely in print, even as Bleeding Cool Online becomes the most influential comics blog in the world, according to Technorati. We like the glossy feel of the paper, the size of the images, the free comics, and the fact that you can always find the article you read yesterday relatively easy. Print, it's



Photo by Mitch Jenkins

the future!

Image's latest summit launched a number of big name projects – though will Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie fans have forgiven them for a lack of *Phonogram 3*? Can Mark Millar's all interconnected titles really work without taking account of *The Unfunnies*? And can Scott Snyder transfer the audience of *Batman* onto new creator owned work outside of DC? Their move to Dropbox indicated a greater confidence in using the internet to distribute comics away from the corporate concerns of big business.

Valiant is launching *Rai #1*, which I understand will rather reinvent the publisher. And it is the first of many big releases for them through 2014. Titan Comics' *Girl One* from Noel Clarke is likely to be rather notable.

And Avatar? Well Alan Moore's *Providence* comes nearer and nearer. His new *League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen* book, *The Roses Of Berlin*, is out any day now as well from Top Shelf and Knockabout. And as you read this, he is filming his new short film-in-a-series, *His Heavy Heart*.

Dark Horse will be bringing us some star quality, with Nicolas Brendon (Xander) co-writing an arc of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer Season 10* with Christos Gage. Their *Aliens/*

Prometheus/Predator/AVP thing, set up with meetings at editor Scott Allie's house with Randy Stradley, Chris Sebela, Chris Roberson, Josh Williamson, Paul Tobin, Patric Reynolds, and more, to tell a wide interconnected story had guidance from Ridley Scott so as to complement *Prometheus 2* – which will make for some rather different looking Aliens in the *Aliens* and *AVP* comics. Look for more at Emerald City Comic Con in March.

But the big Dark Horse news will, naturally, be the return of *The Many Murders Of Miss Cranbourne*, the vicious serial killing antics of the country's greatest amateur detective in the 1940s, as part of *Dark Horse Presents* should not go by unnoticed. The artist is the fabulous Swedish Simon Rohrmuler. And the writer? Well, modesty forbids...

Okay, it's me. Happy New 2014 everyone.

*Got a tip for Rich? You can contact him, or any Bleeding Cool contributor, with story tips, comments, questions, or to ask about advertising at: **BleedingCool.com/contact***

*You can join in the conversation at the Bleeding Cool online discussion forum: **BleedingCool.com/forums***



Photo supplied by Kieron Gillen



Photo by Kendall Whitehouse

WHERE'S SERENITY?

The story that continues
after the film, from writer
Zack Whedon and artists
Georges Jeanty and **Karl Story!**

Serenity
宁静

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REACHING A COMIC MILESTONE IN THE CROSS-MEDIA TRIUMPH OF *ADVENTURE TIME*

by Hannah Means-Shannon

When you look at the puzzle of *Adventure Time*'s immense success as a cartoon, then as a multi-media icon, from a distance, it seems like a phenomenon, a product of cultural trends that happened to come together in the right way at the right time. Approaching for a more detailed look

at its rise, spread, and dominance as a pop culture touchstone provides a few clues in a series of trends that resulted in its rapid rise and appeal. Looking closer still teases out a few key factors that may make or break new properties as they develop and hop from one media form to another. In this case, BOOM! Studios has become not only part of the phenomenon, but also part of the viral spread of *Adventure Time* as a multi-format presence in the popular imagination. As the Harvey and Eisner Award winning comic series reaches its 25th issue in its main storyline, the factors that influenced BOOM!'s success with the comic are becoming more identifiable and more clearly fanbase-building over time.

As a concept, *Adventure Time* has an unusual history, and that may well have influenced some of the unconventional ways in

which it has become a runaway success. Once a pilot video on Youtube, then picked up quickly by the Cartoon Network, *Adventure Time* continued to follow an unlikely course in the hands of creator Pendleton Ward, who has consistently and laboriously rendered the show as hand drawn animation arising from storyboarding, meaning that each episode takes months to complete. This is hardly the common approach to achieving mass media dominance. Viewers quickly become followers of the show, and the specific

feel of the experience may well be based on precisely this commitment to artistic detail as well as writing on Ward's part.

When one considers those factors behind the show's success, which now has a viewership of several million every week, attempting to produce an *Adventure Time* comic seems almost foolhardy. The bizarre alchemy of the show's success is essentially challenging to reproduce in any other medium. Nevertheless, a few key elements at the

heart of the cartoon particularly suggest themselves to the comic format. Firstly, Ward produces the show as a hand drawn artifact through storyboarding and secondly, he builds on the specific aesthetic of the show as was established during its original promo video. Producing an *Adventure Time* comic would have to build on these elements, not by simply translating an animation into a



comic, but producing the new product organically within the comics medium.

When BOOM! secured Ryan North to write the *Adventure Time* comic in 2012, they chose a highly unusual creator whose own ethos in storytelling and experience in multiple mediums became essential to the success of a fairly tricky project. North was already, at this time, a pioneer of webcomics with a remarkable degree of success in several ventures. His *Dinosaur Comics* were driven by unpredictable humor and off the wall dialogue that had become synonymous with North's own personality among his cult following of fans. In short, North not only had a great deal of experience with what types of humor appeal to a multi-media audience, but also had a substantial following of his own which he could bring with him to his new projects.

The artistic team of Shelli Parole and Braden Lamb were also an interesting choice for the *Adventure Time* comic. Both had roots



in all-ages and independent comics, versatile in illustration, coloring, and full-scale self-publishing. Through North, BOOM! managed to capture the experimental, unpredictable atmosphere of Ward's cartoon, and through Parole and Lamb, the hand-drawn, non-schematic visual feel of Ward's artwork. That is not to say the well-matched team up didn't face challenges. North posted some of the process behind this attempt on his Tumblr "what are the haps" on the day of BOOM!'s issue one release for *Adventure Time* the comic. "Initially I knew I wanted to tie the comic to the show and let people know, yes, this is the same thing you've been watching on television, just in another medium. It seemed like doing something with the credit sequence would be a fun way to do it," he says.

This involved the "conceit" that Jake is actually holding the camcorder "used" to record the credit sequence of the cartoon, and that the comic reader can see



Based on this model, the *Adventure Time* comic had a strong chance to engage with the original fanbase of the animated series from its inception. But do all enthusiasts of the *Adventure Time* cartoon read comics?

Following the airing of the show in 2010, but before the launch of the comic in 2012, there had already developed a significant cosplay culture surrounding *Adventure Time*, making its presence felt at major comic conventions. This is not entirely surprising since cosplay can embrace many fields of entertainment well beyond comics, and animated characters have always been featured as favorites. However, the cosplay presence for *Adventure Time* has been more than a simple addition; it has been pronounced, and only continues to grow. Since a substantial number of people who attend comic conventions are comic readers, it stands to reason that many *Adventure Time* fans were already receptive to comics before the launch of the BOOM! series.

him essentially creating the animation's credits. In each panel of the opening pages of *Adventure Time* issue one, the reader can "see" Jake's hand and the camcorder based on North's script. North also provided the original pencils from the artists for readers in the same post. Commenting on them, he notes the "crazy economy" of writing whereby he describes things in a couple of sentences and Parole and Lamb have filled in the landscapes and characters of the opening sequence in astonishing detail. His point in the post is to explain "how comics go from crazy ideas in my head to crazy ideas in your hands!" for readers.

That first step toward an *Adventure Time* comic for North, Parole, and Lamb is exemplary in showing their heavy engagement with the animated show, their willingness to come up with radical and experimental solutions to show that relationship, and finally, the degree of collaborative communication the team had already managed to achieve.



This overlap carries with it, though, some drawbacks. Ingrained fans have expectations, and may even be skeptical of seeing their favorite show rendered into another format, assuming that the transition will be clumsy and inauthentic. When North, Parole, and Lamb brought the comic to readers, they instead found familiar echoes, ingenious solutions, and carefully rendered artwork that created an ethos which was harmonic with the property they had come to know. Like the animated series, the comic also can be handled as an all-ages story, with a peculiar blend of detailed narrative and relatively simple plot-movements that cast a wide net for readers young and adult alike.

The original appeal of the characters created by Pendleton Ward is something that North maintains is at the heart of the ongoing comic series. "What I love most about *Adventure Time* are the characters: you've got Finn and Jake at the center, but there's also Princess Bubblegum and Marceline, the



Ice King, BMO, Lumpy Space Princess, about a billion other characters too - and they all have distinct voices. And then there's the gender-swapped universe that effectively doubles the size of the sandbox I get to play in. The benefit of this is that there's never a sense of limitation, that idea that "oh you can't do this, because it's not an *Adventure Time* story," he explained to *Bleeding Cool Magazine* in the lead up to issue 25. For North, the characters are the source of limitless expansion, and that makes for ease of episodic storytelling, a mainstay of animated shows and comics alike.

The 25th issue of the *Adventure Time* comic features a solid return to character exploration, another reminder of the inherent strengths of the property, and the premise that helps readers explore characters in a new light is an ancient gemstone in the land of Ooo, one that, as North says, has "intersected with and influenced people's lives." The gemstone helps establish a

sense of past and present time in the land of Ooo, with storytelling jumping between points in time with a return to the present adventure of Jake and Finn as a baseline for readers. Issue 25 is another standalone issue for the series, something the comic has become known for, telling intense vignettes within the short form as well as gradually building and filling out the *Adventure Time* universe on par with the animated series. For North, however, these standalone issues are a demonstration of the unique qualities of the comics medium, and do things that simply could not be done in any other art form. "I really like the stand-alone issues because they're a chance to do some fun things: we've had a choose-your-own-path issue with three different endings in it, an issue where Finn and Jake lose their voices and can only speak in pictograms - stuff like that which really benefits and embraces the comics medium to do things with it that are fun and awesome and couldn't be done on the show," he says.

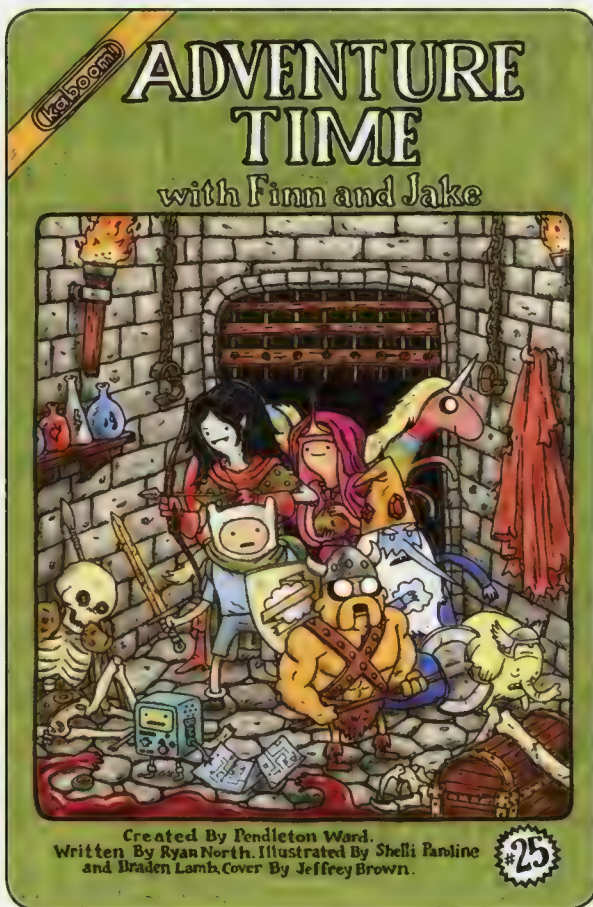
Part of the comic's ability to display the strengths of the medium, though, have nothing to do with North's writing, he insists, but are features coming directly from Parole and Lamb. In their very first collaboration with North on issue 1, they "completely ignored" his instructions, according to North, and "the comic was way better for it." Since then, they continue

to bring entirely original solutions to page break-downs, and North says, "I leave the visual layout entirely up to them." Much of what makes *Adventure Time* a successful comic, rather than just a successful concept, is down to creative decision-making from the artists and issue 25 is no exception. It shows a finely honed instinct for visual gags, an emphasis on reader-engagement based on facial expressions, and a pacing that enables the story to move around in time without lagging or feeling fragmented.

The team on the *Adventure Time*

comic still deal with the challenges presented by creating a comic series that is running at the same time as an ongoing and developing animated show. Issue 25 delves into the history of Ooo and the characters, but has to do so within the confines of relative continuity and consistency with the show, or else the relationship between the comic and show, so far finely balanced, will break down and they will feel like two different properties. North and Ward are committed

to making that relationship a priority. "It's the most awesome if the comic and the show match up as much as they possibly can. That's the fun, right?" says North. His choice of words reveals a lot about the success of the comic and the ethos of the show. It has to be "fun" or both have failed to stay true to the original concept, fun for



viewers and readers, and actually fun for the writers and artists in the sense that it engages them creatively and enables them to personally contribute to the expansive world of *Adventure Time*.

For North as much as for readers, the series is always about variety and the unexpected. "There's always new things to explore and never the sense that you're stuck in this cardboard world, doing the same things over and over again," North assures

readers. And that restless push toward novelty in storytelling may well be the secret ingredient behind the success of the entire *Adventure Time* property. Issue 25 of the comic, described by North as a "significant milestone," essentially sets out to create *Adventure Time* all over again for readers as a form of celebration, but in keeping with the relentless creativity behind the show, also insists on doing so in ways that have simply never been seen before in comics.



IDW UNCOVERS AN X-FILES CONSPIRACY

by Rich Handley

If there's something strange in your neighborhood, who ya'gonna call? If it's something weird and it don't look good, who ya'gonna call? Ghostbusters? Well, sure, you could—but you'd be better off visiting the basement of the FBI's J. Edgar Hoover Building in Washington, D. C. (or IDW Publishing's headquarters in San Diego, California), as it sounds like you've got a case perfectly suited to *The X-Files*. It may just be a conspiracy.

Starting in January, IDW will launch a crossover event spanning the pages of five licensed universes: not only *The X-Files* and *Ghostbusters*, but also *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Transformers*, and *The Crow*. In *The X-Files: Conspiracy*, the Lone Gunmen—John Fitzgerald Byers, Melvin Frohike, and Richard "Ringo" Langly, a trio of counterculture patriots, government watchdogs, computer hackers, and conspiracy theorists who frequently guest-starred on *X-Files* before earning their own short-lived TV spinoff—discover Internet files from the future, revealing that a plague will soon wipe out humanity. With FBI Special Agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully working one lead, the Gunmen must investigate several bizarre urban legends: a group of ghost-hunters, mutant turtles trained in martial arts and living in the sewers, shape-changing alien robots, and a vengeful spirit from beyond the grave.

A crazy idea for a five-course meal, you say? Well, when the Lone Gunmen are at the table, crazy ideas are often the *apéritif*.

TRUST NO ONE

Like *Kolchak the Night Stalker* and *Twin Peaks* before it, *The X-Files* expertly blended horror and science fiction with just enough humor to temper the macabre trappings and keep the tone light. Created by Chris Carter, and airing on Fox from 1993 to 2002, the series starred David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson, respectively, as Mulder and Scully, who investigated unsolved FBI cases involving paranormal and unexplained phenomena. A paranoid conspiracy theorist himself, Mulder fervently believed in extraterrestrials and supernatural





beings, ever since his sister's abduction by Grey aliens years prior, while Scully, a rational scientist, remained skeptical. Eventually, the preponderance of evidence convinced Scully that aliens and the paranormal did, in fact, exist—and that she and her partner were neck-deep in a government conspiracy to cover it all up, and to silence them both, if necessary.

The series lasted for nine seasons and spawned two theatrical films—surviving even Duchovny's lawsuit-charged departure at the end of year seven—and also starred Mitch Pileggi as Walter Skinner (the agents' antagonist-turned-ally supervisor) and William B. Davis as C. G. B. Spender, a. k. a. "the Smoking Man" (the series' primary villain—and one of the most love-hated characters in the history of television). During the two final—and fan-polarizing—seasons, Robert Patrick and Annabeth Gish joined the cast as Special Agents John Doggett and Monica Reyes. Other recurring characters

came and went as the series progressed, notably *The Walking Dead's* Laurie Holden as Marita Covarrubias, *Princess Bride* and *Saw* star Cary Elwes as Brad D. Follmer, character actor Jerry Hardin as "Deep Throat," *Grey's Anatomy's* James Pickens, Jr. as Alvin Kersh, *Kyle XY's* Nicholas Lea as Alex Krycek, and *Firefly* and *Chuck* star Adam Baldwin as Knowle Rohrer.

The X-Files quickly grew from cult hit to bona fide success, with more than 20 million weekly viewers. And the networks took note. *Dark Skies*. *Fringe*. *Millennium*. *The Lost Room*. *Warehouse 13*. *Supernatural*. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Even *Bones* and *Lost*. The past two decades have seen the production of these and many other television series built around the world of the supernatural—and viewers largely have *The X-Files* to thank for it.

The mythos has been heavily merchandised, from video games and magazines to novels and, of course, comic books. Topps was the first to offer *X-Files* comics, releasing 41 monthly issues and a handful of annuals, specials, and episode adaptations. DC's WildStorm imprint followed up with a seven-issue series, as well as a *30 Days of Night* crossover co-published with IDW. In addition, Dark Horse produced a *Lone Gunmen* one-shot and a brief strip in *Dark Horse Extra* #34, while Manga Publishing released a short-lived *X-Files* manga comic. Most recently, IDW launched *The X-Files* Season Ten, a canonical continuation of the TV show, set after the film *The X-Files: I Want to Believe*, and overseen by Chris Carter. Now, IDW is adding *Conspiracy* to its lineup.

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

X-*Files: Conspiracy*, a two-issue miniseries, is written by Paul Crilley (*Infestation 2: Dungeons and Dragons*) and illustrated by John Stanisci (*Spectacular Spider-Man*, *Catwoman*), with covers by Miran Kim, Andrew Currie, and Joe Corroney. Published

in between those two book-ends will be a quartet of one-shots featuring the *X-Files* cast alongside characters from *Transformers* (written by Crilley, art by Dheeraj Verma), *Ghostbusters* (written by Erik Burnham, art by Salvador Navarro), *TMNT* (written by Ed Brisson, art by Michael Walsh) and *The Crow* (written by Denton Tipton, art by Vic Malhotra).

In addition to penning three issues, Crilley conceived the crossover's overall arc, built around the precepts of *The X-Files* and its characters. "I was sent a brief, basically to come up with a story that ties all the properties together, and it had to involve a WikiLeaks situation," he recalls (referring to an online organization founded in 2006 by Julian Assange that publishes anonymous news leaks and classified media). "I spent a lot of time staring at the blank screen, trying to come up with something fitting, believe me." After coming up with a framework, he provided the writers with events that had to happen in their issues to make the whole series progress. "But Erik and Denton and the others all created their own stories around that info."

Why *The X-Files*? "I don't think there has ever been—or ever will be—a show like *The X-Files*," Crilley states. "The storytelling, the chemistry between the main characters, the balance of mythology and one-off episodes, the cinematography—every episode was like a movie. It all just came together to capture a perfect series that didn't tap into the zeitgeist—it created it. I mean, even now, who doesn't know what 'The Truth Is Out There' refers to? Or 'I Want to Believe'? And the writing was just amazing. For a science fiction show, it dealt with faith, belief, the search for the truth, obsession, and spirituality. It challenged the viewers."

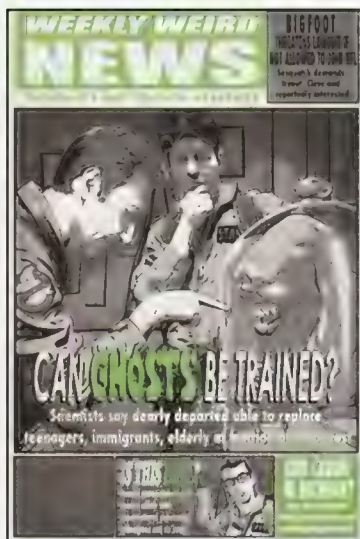
Crilley says he's a fan of not only *X-Files* and *Transformers*, but also *Ghostbusters* and *The Crow*, while his son watches Nickelodeon's *Ninja Turtles* cartoon, so he was well-versed

in the universes involved. Each, he says, was well-suited for interweaving with *The X-Files*, though he is cagey about spoiling plot details. "I can't reveal much," he says "as each episode re-

veals a part of the conspiracy itself. I think I can say there is an unknown contagion spreading throughout the United States, and the Lone Gunmen are sent a WikiLeaks file they think is tied to the outbreak." Readers need not be knowledgeable of all five mythos to enjoy the story, Crilley assures. "Part of the idea is that the Lone Gunmen are trying to find out who these people and creatures are in the other properties, so the reader will find out as the Lone Gunmen do."

Crossovers can be a hard sell with readers, as they tend to be difficult to make work without seeming contrived—for every *Alien Vs. Predator*, there's a *Godzilla Vs. Charles Barkley*. Crilley admits this was daunting, as he knew readers would be mindful of how well he and his fellow writers handled each franchise. "It was really hard, and I hope we've succeeded. The trick, I think, is to take each property seriously. Embrace the absurdity of these characters coming together, accept that, and then just write a fun, enjoyable story. You can have fun within the series, but the writers shouldn't seem like they're not taking the story itself seriously."

Crilley will also pen the *Transformers* one-shot, in which the Lone Gunmen's pursuit of secrets will lead them to evidence of mechanical extraterrestrial life. Fans can





look forward to an encounter between the Gunmen and Optimus Prime, with the government watchdogs tracking the conspiracy all the way to Cybertron.

I WANT TO BELIEVE

Crilley's artist on *Conspiracy*, John Stanisci, is a long-time *The X-Files* fan, and was thus "very excited" to be invited aboard. "When I got the assignment," he says, "I hadn't watched the show in a long time, but I got to go back and pretty much watch it all the way through. And it was really fun to revisit those characters and remember how great that series was. It really holds up."

Most of the first issue, Stanisci reveals, involves the Lone Gunmen's story. "They're so great, and we'll do a lot of fun stuff with them in the series, too. They're not headlining, but they're on the case when Mulder and Scully get involved. In fact, I'm just finishing up today a nice car-chase

sequence—they're being chased by a mysterious bad guy. It's fun to have them at the forefront for a change."

The idea of a multi-universe crossover is one Stanisci found fascinating. "I think it's great," he says. "I mean, particularly with the *Ghostbusters*—I know the *X-Files* universe is much more of a serious, thematic, not-quite-light fare, like *Ghostbusters* is, but the two worlds can meet, and it can be fun. I will say that with my particular corner of the *X-Files* world, in our series, it's more in the traditional *X-Files* thing—it's sort of dark and serious. I think fans will have a good time with it; they'll really love it."

This project allowed Stanisci to make a leap from inking to penciling. "The most difficult part was changing people's perception of me," he says. "When I left DC, I'd just come off *Batman*, and it was a pretty successful book. Certainly the people at DC were very happy with it, but the perception of me as only an inker was so strong. I tried to say, 'You know, I want to pencil,' but the doors didn't swing wide open."

To make the change, he realized, he needed to step back for a year or two and then re-emerge and begin offering his services as a penciller. "It was really a gamble, as I made a very conscious decision to disappear." Thankfully, he says, that gamble paid off, and his penciling work is now receiving a lot of praise.

HEROES IN A HALF-SHELL

Ed Brisson (*Prophet*, *Jinnrise*) says he was quite surprised upon hearing about a planned tie-in between *X-Files* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*—and that he'd be writing it. "My initial reaction was, 'Huh?!?'" he recalls.

"The more I thought it over, the more it made sense, though," Brisson admits. "I really like the idea of the *TMNT* and *X-Files* (primarily the Lone Gunmen) crossing over. It's not so inconceivable that there might

have been mutated turtles in the *X-Files* universe." Writing the one-shot, he says, confirmed this for him." Turns out that *The Lone Gunmen* and *TMNT* mesh well... I do think it might seem like a head-scratcher to some at first, but I think it works. The *Lone Gunmen* and *TMNT* play really well off one another."

Though constrained from revealing much about his one-shot, Brisson does confirm that none of the other franchises will be involved. "However," he teases, "as well as being part of the larger *Conspiracy* crossover, this issue also acts as a sequel of sorts to one of my favorite *X-Files* episodes—though I'm not spoiling which."

Brisson worked with IDW editor Bobby Curnow to make sure his chapter fit smoothly into Crilley's grand outline for the crossover event. "There were a few things that had to land within my issue, but I was given a lot of freedom to put together what I feel is a pretty fun issue." Since his one-shot occurs after some others in the miniseries, "giving away details about what happens will probably spoil things in those first issues," he says.

A long-time fan of *Ninja Turtles* mythology, Brisson has been a regular reader since the original black-and-white *Mirage* series created by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird. "I've always been a fan of the characters," he says, "and have enjoyed the direction that IDW's taken it." He also counts himself a Scully and Mulder aficionado. "I've seen every episode of *X-Files* at least twice over. I watched it when it originally aired, and just recently re-watched it all on Netflix, before being offered this issue. So, yeah, a definite OG fan of both series."

CATS AND DOGS LIVING TOGETHER

When writer-artist Erik Burnham was hired to contribute a *Ghostbusters* one-shot, he was a natural choice for the job. Not only has he written for IDW's ongoing

Ghostbusters titles since 2011, as well as *Mars Attacks the Real Ghostbusters*, and *Ghostbusters: Infestation*, but he has also penned several *TMNT* adventures.

To Burnham, the idea of a multi-universe crossover was a great concept. "While it might seem insane almost anywhere else," he states, "at IDW, ideas like this are part of the natural order. I'm not sure if it originated with editor-in-chief Chris Ryall or *X-Files* editor Denton Tipton (or some other mad genius), but I loved the idea from the second I heard about it. Crossovers like this are unique, and I'm honored to have been asked to be a part of it."

Burnham's *Ghostbusters* issue will not feature elements of the other tied-in universes. "This part of the crossover will be limited to the *Lone Gunmen*, the four original *Ghostbusters* and Janine Melnitz," he explains, and will also not tie in directly with his monthly *Ghostbusters* comic. "I'll write the characters the same way, of course, but I won't bleed anything from the ongoing into the crossover, or vice versa." According to Burnham, newcomers needn't be concerned about a lack of familiarity with the cast. "If a reader has seen the first movie," he says, "they'll know all they need to. But even if they haven't, the concept is pretty self-explanatory: These guys? They catch ghosts. I'm not bringing in anything more complicated than that to the crossover."

Burnham calls himself "a huge *Ghostbusters* fan," and says he enjoys *The*





X-Files series as well. “*X-Files* I watched from go, and enjoyed while it was running. I’ve been hunting for enough time to go back and re-watch the show, now that it’s all waiting for me on Netflix—and writing this issue has only intensified that desire.” The worlds of *Ghostbusters* and *The X-Files*, he says, have some natural overlap.” Both franchises have moments of humor and horror, though the mixtures vary. That makes it all a little bit more of a natural fit than, say, *Godzilla Vs. Barkley* (though “*Godzilla got busy*” is still one of the most hilarious captions ever). ”

The Lone Gunmen also fit perfectly in both worlds, Burnham notes, since the trio “play well in either dramatic or zany scenes” and still feel natural. “That makes it easier to make it all work—and it doesn’t hurt that Paul Crilley had a very clear idea of what he needed from *Ghostbusters* in the overall *Conspiracy* arc to begin with... It’s great to have a unifying vision in a crossover like this; that makes for a handy roadmap.”

That proved helpful, given the short amount of time Burnham had to complete his issue. “I’m always nervous the first time I take a crack at characters. Ideally, with a property based on a movie or TV show, I’ll watch as much as I can, to try and absorb the cadence of speech as best I can. Unfortunately, time was not on my side for this project, and I haven’t watched *X-Files* since first-run, so I erred on the side of caution and leaned on the expertise of editor and *X-Files* guru Denton Tipton, which was probably easier than watching a couple dozen hours of TV.”

A WORLD WITHOUT JUSTICE

Tipton himself is writing *The Crow*’s one-shot, which will introduce an all-new Crow character with his own origin story, making it accessible to readers regardless of their knowledge of *The Crow*’s established history. “The event is meant to be satisfying with no foreknowledge of any of the characters—but if you do [know the universes], there will be an extra layer of enjoyment.”

An IDW employee, Tipton has edited numerous series, including *Transformers* and *The X-Files Season Ten*; has penned prior *Crow* storylines; and oversaw the *Conspiracy* project. From his perspective, the crossover was a natural fit.

“Each January,” Tipton states, “IDW kicks off the new year with an event involving many of our biggest properties. *Infestation* [an undead-themed mash-up involving *Star Trek*, *Ghostbusters*, *Transformers*, *G. I. Joe*, *Zombies Vs. Robots*, and *CVO: Covert Vampiric Operations*] and *Mars Attacks IDW* [combining *Mars Attacks* with *Popeye*, *KISS*, *Ghostbusters*, *Transformers*, and *Zombies Vs. Robots*] are a couple examples. During an editorial meeting, we circled around *The X-Files* as the centerpiece because of the success of *Season Ten*, and how the setup lends itself to exploring other worlds.”

Tipton calls himself “a big fan” of all

five franchises, adding, "We brought in writers with a great passion for each individual universe to ensure each gets the attention it deserves. I've been a big fan of *The Crow* since the original James O'Barr miniseries, and absolutely love the Alex Proyas film." Though aware that there will naturally be skeptics about such a crossover, he says it was actually fairly easy to mesh the five worlds. "*Ghostbusters* and *The Crow* are no-brainers, being involved in the supernatural. *TMNT* makes for a perfect urban legend for investigation and the Transformers being aliens plays right into *The X-Files* mythos."

In spearheading *Conspiracy*, Tipton worked closely with Crilley and the one-shot authors. "Paul created the framework, which was shared with each of the writers and editors to base their scripts on." The hardest part? "Making the different voices distinct to each property, yet remain a cohesive narrative... That and making the art match, since each book was being produced simultaneously. I'm sure there will be a few things that don't line up exactly, due to the nature of the beast, but not for a lack of trying by all the creative [teams] and editorial."

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

According to Tipton, IDW may opt to revisit the *Conspiracy* arc in the future, though no decision has yet been made. "Any direct spinoffs of *Conspiracy* are still in wait-and-see mode," he notes. In the meantime, the creators are busy with other work. For Tipton, that includes editing a re-launch of 2000AD's *Rogue Trooper* strip with Brian Ruckley and Alberto Ponticelli, as well as a continuation of Keifer Sutherland's television show *24*, setting the stage for the upcoming TV miniseries, *24: Live Another Day*.

Crilley has pitched a few ideas to IDW, and hopes to see them blossom. "We'll see how they're received," he says. "But no concrete plans yet." Stanisci, meanwhile,

is penciling issues of *Judge Dredd* and *Constantine* (DC Comics' "New 52" *Hellblazer* re-vamp, about British occultist John Constantine), and his work can be viewed online at stockyboy-deviantart.com/gallery.

"One of my fears was, OK, I'm going to come back but I'm going to be thrown something that I don't really want to draw, or that I don't have a particular interest in," he says. "But I've been very, very fortunate so far. *Dredd*, *X-Files*, *Constantine*—these are books that are really up my alley. I feel like I can really bring something to the table here."

Brisson's fans should check out *Sheltered*, an ongoing Image comic that he calls "a 'pre-apocalyptic' story about a group of doomsday preppers." In addition, he has penned a two-issue run on Marvel's *Secret Avengers*, as well as an issue of *RoboCop*. Finally, Burnham is working on a *Ghostbusters* 30th-anniversary story, titled "Mass Hysteria," to appear in the ongoing *Ghostbusters* comic in February 2014. He also has a few plans he is unable to share at this time, noting, "Hopefully I'll be able to shout the other projects from the rooftops soon."

A British occultist? Doomsday preppers? Superheroes operating under a veil of secrecy? Robotic law-enforcement officers? Mass hysteria? Secret projects no one can know about? Never mind the *Ghostbusters*—someone call IDW... this has all the makings of *Conspiracy II*.





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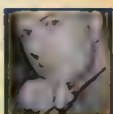
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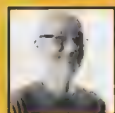
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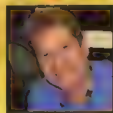
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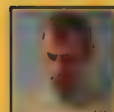
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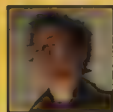
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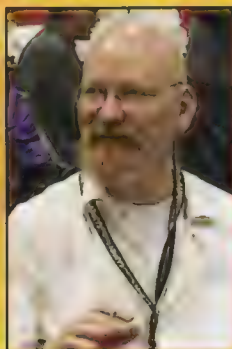
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SMOOTH AS SILK: UNITY TACKLES THE WEBNET!

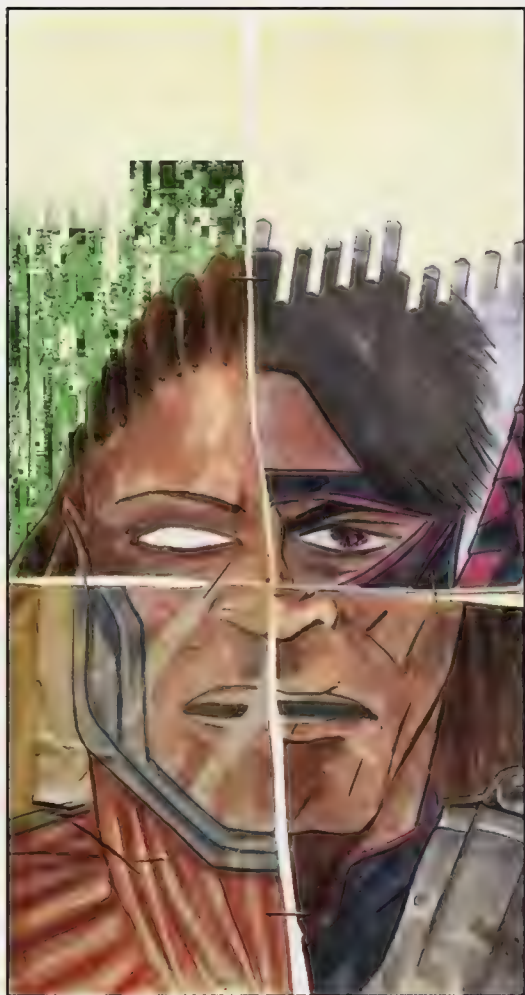
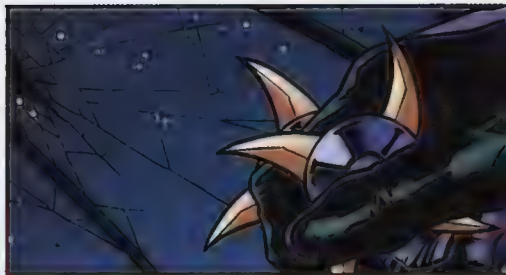
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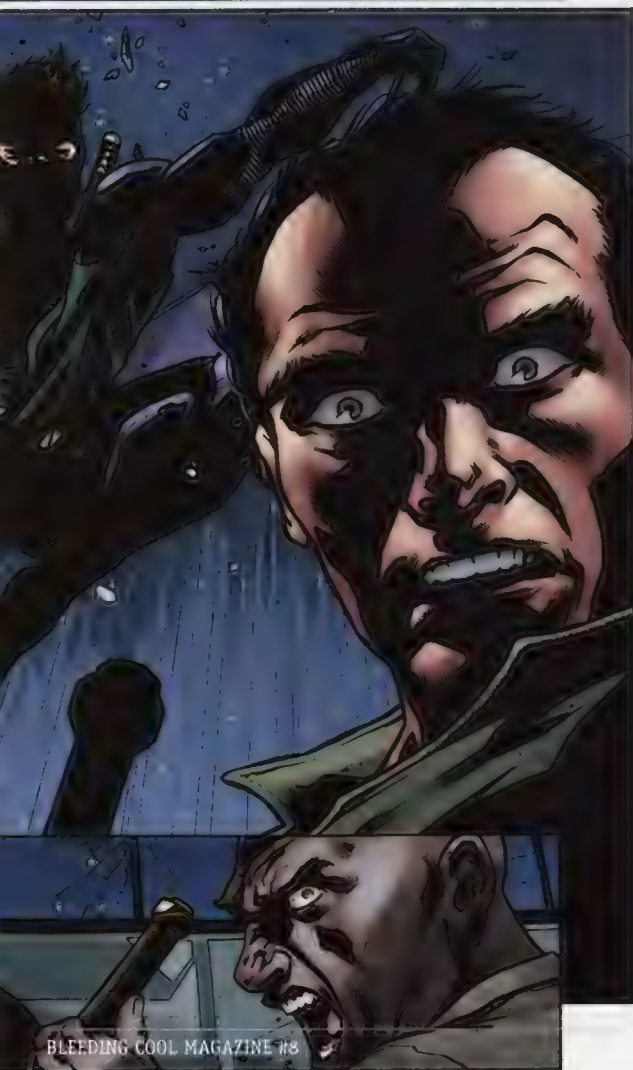
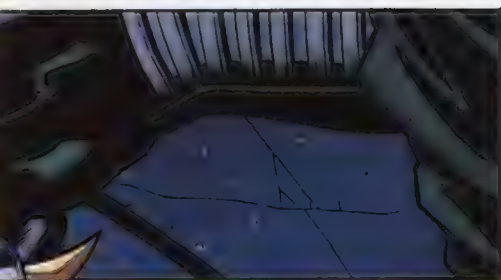


SMOOTH AS SILK: UNITY TACKLES THE WEBNET!

by James Kuhoric

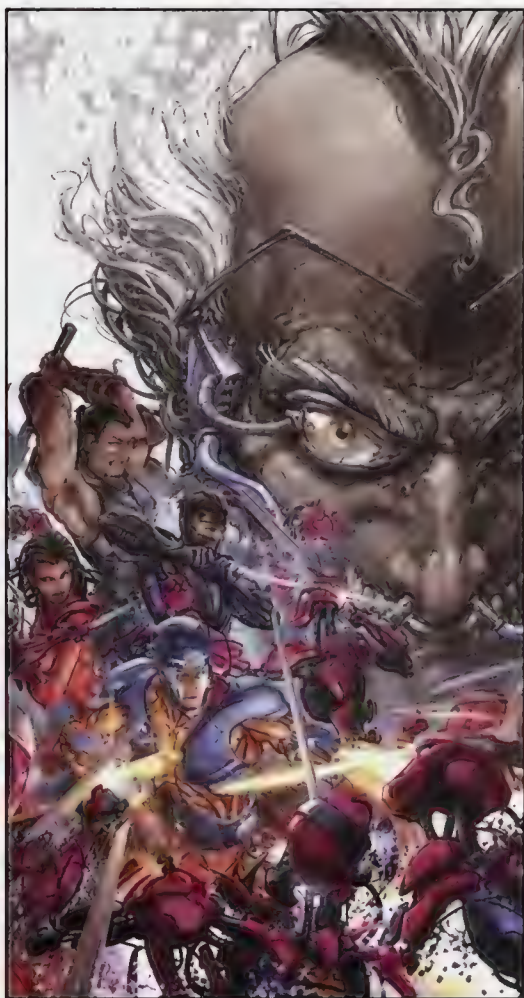
Valiant promised that the new on-going *Unity* title would be big, REALLY BIG. They recruited Matt Kindt and Doug Braithwaite to tell the first chapter of the tale and gave the comics community a look at something that paid homage to the past but at the same time was a wholly new original approach. We were expecting something epic, something that would place a group of Valiant heroes at the forefront of the universe in a way that the Avengers or the Justice League has done for Marvel and DC. It's safe to say that expectations were at an all-time high and that many people wondered if





it really could be done.

When *Unity* #1 debuted in November it answered that question with a resounding "yes." The issue ranked 21st overall in units shipped placing 70,000+ copies into comic shops and selling out within two days of its on sale date. By all indications the book was a huge success competing with and beating comic sales from the industry giants and besting books like *New Avengers*, *X-Men*, and *Green Lantern*. Fans bought in and were on board to see how the Valiant Universe would handle a unifying team tackling an unstoppable foe. They were not disappointed. The first issue packed nail biting action into a gripping character drama that set the stage for the entire series. It was the prototypical unstoppable force meets immovable



THE NEW UNITY ROLL CALL:

As issue #5 launches the new *Unity* team we take an inside look at the power players rocking the Valiant universe.

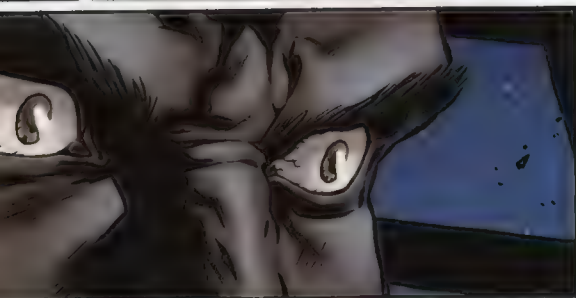
X-O MANOWAR

Fifth century Visigoth warrior and chosen heir of King Alaric, conqueror of Rome, Aric of Dacia has lost his home, his people and everything he knows to the brutal alien conquerors known as the Vine. Enslaved for years aboard a Vine colony ship, Aric engineered his escape, taking with him his captor's most sacred and powerful relic, the X-O Manowar armor. Now displaced into the present day, Aric has returned to Earth with the last remnant of his people freed from Vine captivity. His determination to protect his people and find them a new home has taken him from the greatest threat *Unity* has yet faced into an uneasy alliance with the team.

ETERNAL WARRIOR

Beginning in the wake of an ancient cataclysm, Gilad Anni-Padda has served as the Earth's undying champion, guided by the Geomancers— an unbroken line of mystics who hear voice of the Earth—to serve and protect it through untold ages. 10,000 years of nearly endless war have made Gilad one of the most dangerous men ever to have lived. And now, in an age when Earth faces threats once undreamed of, Gilad stands to face them with *Unity* and the Earth's deadliest men and women at his side.





object as X-O Manowar's actions put the world on the verge of a new global war. Alien technology, Russian military might, and a desperate gambit by the most dangerous man in the Valiant Universe collided in an arc that is still playing out in the pages of *Unity* now with issue #4 only a few weeks away.

Following the events that led the Valiant Universe's first super team to be called to action, one must ask the obvious question. If the new *Unity* squad managed to resolve the *X-O Manowar* threat and survive what surely was five till midnight on the nuclear clock, how could they possibly raise the stakes from a story arc that literally held the balance of the world in its pages? Valiant turned once again to Matt Kindt who has become an architect of the developing series to find a threat that focuses its malice inward on an unsuspecting world. Dr. Silk is a madman and a genius that is "driven by hubris...jealousy and heartbreak. He'll be very human and also very, very bad," according to Kindt who also hinted at the origins of the strange new villain and gave eager fans a dire warning about what to expect – "I've put a lot of thought into Dr. Silk and one of the things that makes him interesting is that he's crazy smart... not just crazy. He's kind of a withered old guy which implies a lot of history. So part of his intrigue is going to be what he's done in the past and how it's going to effect our present." Fans of Ninjak will remember this demented and disfigured villain as one of the Valiant Universe's original bad guys and the mastermind behind the WEBNET terrorist cell. With a mysterious past that is somehow tied to Ninjak himself, the enigmatic Dr. Silk is set upon wiping humanity from the globe through a manufactured global pandemic. Kindt told USA Today that the virus isn't one of the standard zombie or sickness

THE NEW UNITY ROLL CALL, CONTINUED:

NINJAK

A freelance secret agent and weapons expert of unparalleled skill with a shadowy past and shifting allegiances, Colin King has joined Unity at the behest of his employers in the British secret intelligence service, MI-6. As one of the world's most lethal hand-to-hand combatants and a clandestine operative of unmatched skill and resources, Ninjak has joined Unity to neutralize threats that a lone man of even his singular skills cannot hope to defeat.

LIVEWIRE

A psionic technopath, able to control machines with force of will alone, Amanda McKee was once the pupil and most trusted advisor of Toyo Harada, the billionaire visionary and founder of the Harbinger Foundation, an organization devoted to activating and training individuals of enormous psionic potential and indoctrinating them to its founder's vision. Livewire has defied Harada's will and joined with *Unity*, but only because she believes Harada's vision is too important to follow him blindly.

tropes of typical comic stories, that in fact it is "something a little more creepy than that – and Silk is most likely responsible. The beauty of the killer-virus trope in this story, though, is not that it's happening, but why it's happening." And Ninjak, the newly appointed leader of the Unity team must uncover the secrets behind the doctor's rise to power and his horrific endgame before the entire human race is annihilated.

Okay – wiping out the entire human race...that certainly works for upping the intensity level in this new second story arc. And to illustrate the horrors that WEBNET are capable of, Valiant recruited their latest exclusive artist, CAFU of *Earth 2* and *Action Comics*, to work with Kindt on this new chapter. The three issue story "Trapped by Webnet" begins in March and takes the newly minted super team to a terrifying place where they are all that stands between the world and a madman bent on genocide. Who needs the Avengers when Unity is on the case? Now they just need a catchy battle cry – "all for one and one for all?" Nah, that's been taken and they let their actions speak for themselves.



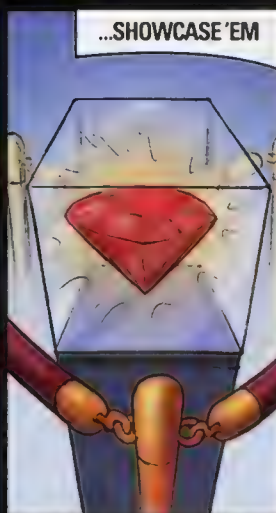
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THE PULL LIST

by James Kuhoric

The New Year's hoopla has finally died down. All the noisemakers are tossed, the booze is empty, and the revelry over. 2014 isn't just an idea or an ideal but a reality. If you are like me, you're worn out from all the hype from the event and just want to focus on things you can count on – like new comics. Well, true believer, that's what I hope to do with this month's edition of the *Pull List*. We're stripping away the hype and focusing on sure fire comic book goodness for this season. What are the best books we can count on to entertain during the cold weather months? As you settle down to celebrate Groundhog Day, these are some comics that hopefully won't make you feel like Bill Murray reliving Punxsutawney's most infamous holiday.

There are many great comics out there...but these are a few the most anticipated ones from my January and February wish list.

TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER #1

When I was a kid, no one could come up with a particularly good taunt to mock my odd last name. When they finally did, it was really more of a moniker than a slight – “Prehistoric Kuhoric” one particularly innovative young elementary school name slinger had said. And it was somewhat apropos. I did love dinosaurs. And I still do.

Perhaps my age is showing here, after all I was one of the original readers who jumped on the Valiant bandwagon the first time around and was introduced to *Turok* in that context. From there I tracked down the Dell comics and realized that this character was one with such a rich history and a wealth of adventures that really were the stuff of legend. What red blooded comic reader wouldn't love a story about a noble Native American warrior and vicious



prehistoric dinosaurs? I mean that's like a peanut butter and jelly combo for comics. Now Dynamite Entertainment is bringing back *Turok* with the help of Greg Pak and MiroColak and featuring covers by Jae Lee and Bart Sears. I'm picking this as my sure fire best comic of the young new year. D.E. has shown that they can breathe new life into classic properties and this one is as classic as they come. I'm excited to read the new *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter #1* comic.

Love It: Prehistoric Kuhoric approved!

Hate It: Others have tried to resurrect *Turok* and failed. But I believe Dynamite has the right formula and passion for the character to do it right.

Honorable Mention (Fantastic Adventures): *Legenderry #1*– Bill



Willingham can do no wrong. I've been a fan since *Elementals* #1 all the way back to the 80s. And giving him a forum to tell a broad steampunk adventure is both a masterstroke and a windfall for comic readers. I have very

high hopes for this series and I know Bill Willingham will deliver.

TOMB RAIDER #1

Laura Croft is one of the all-time greatest video game characters. Strong, intelligent, and deadly, she has taken us through four versions of the Playstation and provided the modern day equivalent of Indiana Jones for archeology and adventure. Her comic book exploits have been well documented and in all honesty she's been missed in the



medium for the past several years. But how do you do something bigger than all that has come before? I could not think of a better solution than to give Gail Simone the reins to tell Tomb Raider's story. Simone who has worked on the best female characters in the business and given us comics that are simply a notch above with everything she has created. I would have been excited to see a new Laura Croft comic coming out, but with Simone directing the adventure, I'm just about giddy to read this new series. Welcome back, *Tomb Raider* – we missed you.

Love It: Gail Simone could write the phone book and it would be worth reading – give her one of the most enduring female action heroes ever created and you have the making for a special book. Now we just need that Tomb Raider, Red Sonja, Batgirl crossover and all will be right with the world.

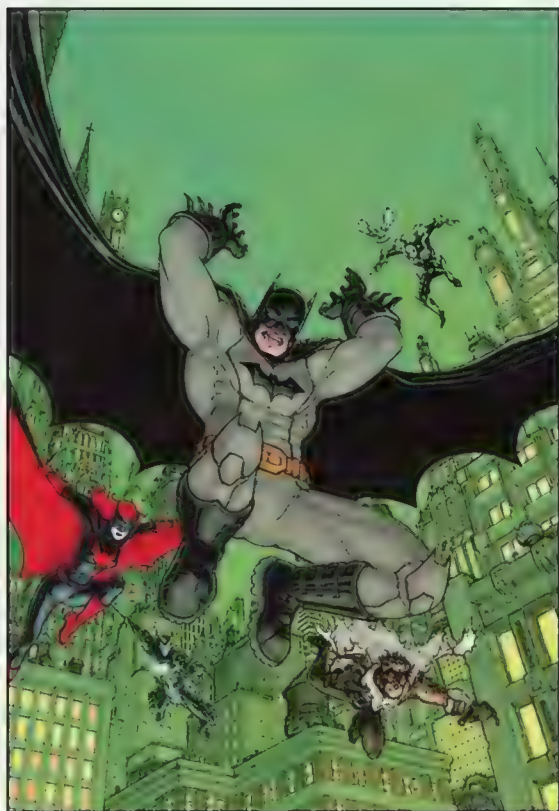
Hate It: I've read a lot of *Tomb Raider* comics... this needs to be different enough to hook us from the start.



Honorable Mention (Licensed):

X-Files: Conspiracy #1 – Remember *Infestation*, the massive multi-series crossover where IDW had the likes of *Star Trek*, *Transformers*, and *GI Joe* fought it out

across their titles with hordes of the undead? Well IDW is at it again, this time taking the *X-Files* through a tour of other great licensed properties beginning with *Ghostbusters*. I really love what they are doing with the *X-Files* series proper and I'm sure that the *Conspiracy* titles will continue with even more fun. I mean who doesn't want to see Frohicke with a proton pack? Don't cross the streams, Langley. It would be... bad.



DETECTIVE COMICS #27

DC is celebrating the release of *Detective Comics* #27 with a mega-sized anniversary event. This 96 page behemoth features stories by some of the best and brightest in comics – John Layman, Scott Snyder, Paul Dini, Gregg Hurwitz, Peter J. Tomasi, and even Brad Meltzer are coming together to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the 1939 creation of Batman. They’ve paired these superstar writers with some of the biggest names in illustration including Neal Adams, Bryan Hitch, and Frank Miller. If you are a Dark Knight fan, this would seem like the ultimate love letter to a character that has defined the superhero landscape since its inception. There isn’t very much in the way of info on the contents besides the creative teams, but I have to think DC will treat this like the event it is and provide a comic that is worthy of its nine dollar price tag.

Love It: The creative teams are a wish list of Batman’s best authors and illustrators.

Hate It: If you are asking me to pay almost ten bucks for a single issue of *Detective Comics*, it had better satisfy.

Honorable Mention (Superheroes):



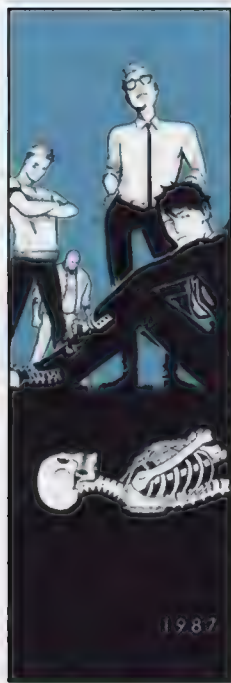
Miracleman #1– I feel like we’ve been talking about the return of Miracleman forever. No really...like since the beginning of time. And this month begins the reprinting of the original stories leading up to the release of the new material. I’m excited to finally see the conclusion of Gaiman and Buckingham’s classic storyline. Eventually...

Those are the books I’m adding to my pull list this winter. Here are a few others I’ll be watching out for as well:



Adventure Time #25 (Boom!) – What time is it? It’s time for an awesome anniversary issue of the coolest kids’ comic out there! Ryan North delivers a story that takes Finn, Jake, and all the candy kingdom notables in search of something... preeeeecioussss.

Bloodshot and H.A.R.D. Corps: H.A.R.D. Corps #0 (Valiant) – I’m sold on this for one reason – the creative team. Christos Gage and Joshua Dysart are masters with fresh storytelling and illustration. I can’t wait to see this 90s throwback



issue that takes us back to the early days the living weapons. Grunge, dial up internet, and a new Bloodshot mission – what could be better?

Deadly Class #1

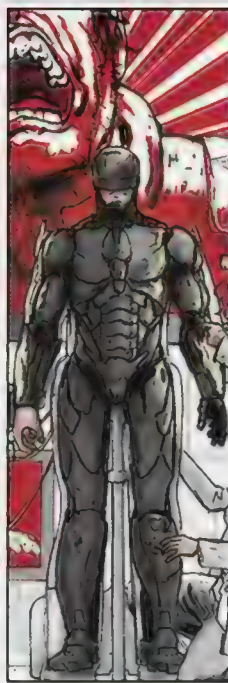
(Image Comics) – Rick Remender takes us back to the 80s and the most brutal high school on Earth. This is where the world's notorious crime families send the next generations of assassins to be trained and prepared for their violent roles. A failing grade in Dismemberment 101 can do a lot more than get you expelled.

The Fuse #1

(Image Comics) – Murder on an orbiting energy station. Antony Johnston has a way of delivering a high concept. I believe that this could be one of the big books of the new year.

Gravel: Combat Magician #0 (Avatar) – The new Gravel series is set to bring back the hard as nails combat magician, William Gravel with a vengeance. Mike Wolfer brings his trademark horror storytelling skills to one of indie comics' best anti-heroes.

Robocop Movie Tie Ins (Boom!) – The new Robocop movie looks pretty awesome and Boom! is helping get



ready for it with four movie tie-in prequel comics that will fill in the gaps and get you ready for a new helping of the inscrutable half man, half robot, all cop.

Rogue Trooper #1

(IDW) – I haven't read much of the classic *Rogue Trooper* comic fare, but I'm going to give this new series a go. You've got my interest, IDW, now let's see what you can do with it.

The Royals: Masters of War #1

(DC/Vertigo) – The Brian Bolland cover alone is enough to get me interested in the book. This 1940s revisionist history comic sounds like an exciting concept. But with books like *Uber* out there, it has a lot of very stiff competition.

The Twilight Zone #1

(Dynamite) – How did it take us this long to finally get the classic sci-fi noir series back into comics? J. Michael Straczynski is the perfect scribe to resurrect one of the best genre shows of all time.

Wolverine #1

(Marvel) – So...Wolverine doesn't have his healing factor and he's using a gun. Okay...I'm game...let's see whatcha got, bub.



VALIANT

EARTH WILL BE THE
GREATEST HUNT
OF ALL

ARMOR
HUNTERS

SUMMER

2014

ROBOCOP REMODELED AND REBOOTED

by **Brandon Connelly**

If there are two genres that we'll hear time and again are particularly good at refracting the zeitgeist it's science fiction and satire. Paul Verhoeven's original *Robocop*, with its scathing cyberpunk screenplay by Ed Neumeier and Michael Miner, was a classic on both counts, and a perfect case in point. Their film might be a window into a future that never was - not precisely, though it's sometimes scary how close a lot of it seems - but it's even more valuable as a doorway back to the late 80s America that created it.

My thinking is that this strong reliance on cultural context for the details of the original movie renders its central premise ripe and ready for a remake. Surely a new *Robocop* can't help but be different, meaningfully so, and provide an interesting reflection of the modern culture that has given rise to it? To my mind, the idea of remaking *Robocop* was always an inherently fascinating prospect, an obvious way to attack some big, contemporary concerns and even offset them against the 1980s which were perfectly captured in the original.

And when it was announced that José Padilha was going to be developing and directing this do-over, it became obvious that this film wasn't just intriguing in principle, it was already interesting in practice. Padilha is best known for the *Elite Squad* movies, a pair of high-action policieros set in his native Brazil. I've never been to Argentina, but like *Robocop* told my pasty, teenaged English self some truths about America that I later saw first-hand (and many of them were already

or soon after true on my own side of the Atlantic, I'd have to admit), the *Elite Squad* pictures capture a compelling sense of time, place, and political structure that would seem to reflect something true about Argentina, its police, and corruption. And according to *Elite Squad*'s homeland reviews, it succeeds profoundly. Padilha has made a heightened genre movie, for sure, but also a film with a lot on its mind and an eye on what's going on around it.

What's more, like the Dutch Verhoeven before him, Padilha will be bringing an outsider's eye to the America portrayed in *Robocop*, and that too is an exciting prospect. There are also echoes of the making of the first film in that screenwriters Nick Schenk and Joshua Zetumer are Americans, writing from that inside perspective. The two



films' respective creative teams are made to a somewhat similar recipe, a cocktail of influences and points of view with the potential to ferment into something rather heady.

George Romero famously made another instalment in his series of *Dead* films every time he saw a new political or social circumstance to target, explore or amplify. Even the most successful remake of Romero's zombie movies, Zack Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead*, rooted itself in a new set of anxieties, topical to the time of its making, while also proving just what was still relevant from the original conception and absolutely needed to be retained.

And there's no reason *Robocop* can't work just the same way. As long as we have a police force, of some kind; as long as we have corporate interests invested in this force; as long as technology is being used to dehumanise and, indeed, kill, then there's going to be something for *Robocop* to take aim at.

The big change between *Robocop* then and *Robocop* now is the invention of drone

warfare. Arguably, the very central concept of the first film prefigured the use of drones, but now there's a lot of real life history to the technology and a debate to be engaged.

Other aspects of the United States' continued interventions in Middle Eastern conflicts have been folded into the storyline too, and there's no escaping the direct relevance when you see the ED-209 malfunction takes place during a "peace-keeping mission" in Tehran.

There's an important detail in the new *Robocop* design which sees Alex



Murphy's gun hand left intact, not replaced with the titanium proxy of the first movie's design. The narrative explanation for this is interesting: it's illegal for a robot to be armed on American soil, and so this hand is Robocop inventors



OmniConsumer Products' loophole to work around the legislation. It's a short jump to comparisons with other such loopholes, from extraordinary rendition on foreign soil to the very concept of Guantamo Bay. The hand plays into the human character drama

of cyborgized officer Alex Murphy too, with the man made complicit in every last shot he fires because it's his finger on the trigger.

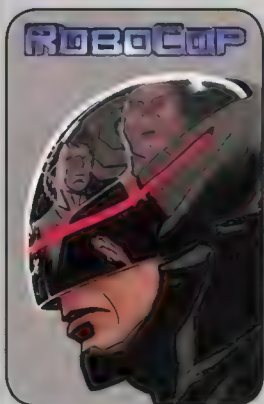
Whereas the first film had fake advertisements to quickly shade in the details of a morally ruined Detroit and several cut-aways to news reports to act as a kind of Greek chorus, the new *Robocop* has its own TV commentator on standby to narrate and underline. This is Pat Novak, as played by Samuel L. Jackson, and he's the host of *The Novak Element*, a soapbox show in the model of those currently fronted by Glenn Beck, Rachel Maddow, Sean Hannity, or similar.

Novak was the first thing on screen in the Comic-Con presentation for *Robocop* back in the summer, and the extended clip that Sony previewed went a long way to making the case for the remake. All of the above political and social notions were evoked, and the core drama of Officer Alex Murphy's exploitation at the hands of a giant corporation was very clear as well.

But still, many in that room, and many more who have been following the



On February 12th the new *Robocop* movie will take us back to the streets of crime riddled Detroit as Alex Murphy once again is transformed into the future of law enforcement. BOOM! Studios is ushering in the movie with four anthology style direct tie-in one shots that feature some of the hottest up-and-coming creators in comics today. Done in the style of the vastly successful *Star Trek* movie prequels from IDW, these new *Robocop* comics are positioned to give readers a deeper connection to the new film by filling in the gaps and adding layers to the story that will play out on the big screen. *Bleeding Cool Magazine* suggests you check out these comics...or there will be trouble.



ROBOCOP: BETA #1

By Ed Brission, Emilio Laiso, Greg Smallwood

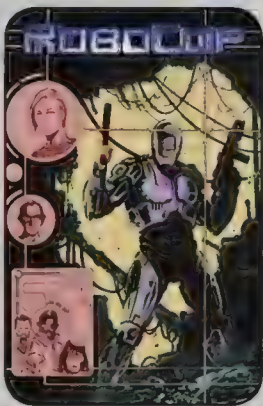
Who could forget the original fate of Alex Murphy in the first *Robocop* movie? *Robocop: Beta #1* takes readers deeper into the fall of a good cop and the rise of a machine.

The scientist behind the Robocop fusion of human and machine must come to grips with the sacrifices it takes to create a working cyborg model. The lines of morality are blurred and Dr. Norton finds himself head to head with the company's vision for the future of law enforcement.

ROBOCOP: MEMENTO MORI #1

By Frank J. Barbiere, Joao Vieira, Chris Mooneyham

Melding machine and flesh is one thing... but how do you prepare a human psyche for the loss of everything it



development of the film and watching its trailers unspool over the last few months, have shown a great deal of cynicism about this remake. It would seem the doubts aren't anything too personal, though, stemming more from a mistrust of remakes and reboots in general.

I don't share this particular bias. As far as I can see, a pre-existing film is as valid a source for a new movie as a novel, a stage play, a TV series, or even an original screenplay. All of those things can make a solid foundation.

And while it may have been possible to make many of New *Robocop's* points with an all-original, never before seen story line of some kind, it wouldn't have been possible to make them all because this film uses images and ideas from the first as part of its meaning.

Perhaps the most obvious example of this is in a sequence from the new film's screenplay where a focus group throw scorn on a Robocop design - the classic Robocop design, just given a quick bit of hi-tech polish - and say that



it looks like a toy from the 80s.

There's no doubt that the original *Robocop* was a fine, fine film and it certainly doesn't need a remake or any kind of fixing up, but that's not the point at all. The only question that's really relevant, given that movie studios just won't stop chasing remakes as long as remakes keep sucking up box office dollars, is how good this new film will be on its own terms. The new movie's writers being aware of what went before in the first film and having a point of view on it is only encouraging, I think.

America has changed, and enough so that it needs a rather different Robocop. I'm not talking about a cyborg law enforcer to protect the place, of course, I mean a new movie, its cross-hairs tracking the new moving targets. I welcome Padilha's attempts and I hope - when the full, finished movie starts screening, just a handful of days after this magazine's street date, that *Robocop* rebooted lives up to its promise.



values? As Alex Murphy's body is transformed, his memories converge with the freakish reality of the situation. Interfacing with circuitry and computer processors in ways no one imagined, his mind develops a blurred reality of memories attempting to make sense of his fate. And as his body becomes something more than human, his mind fights to remain connected to the things he lost.



ROBOCOP: TO LIVE AND DIE IN DETROIT #1

By Joe Harris & Piotr Kowalski

They created him to weed out corruption and deal with the guilty on the streets. But they never imagined that directive would be applied to the corruption within OCP. Now as the newly minted crime buster gains popularity with the masses and notoriety with the criminal element, the corporate machine must find a way to stop the law dog they created from bringing down the house they so carefully constructed. The OCP managment is about to find out that some crimes cannot go unpunished.

ROBOCOP: HOMINEM EX MACHINA #1

By Michael Moreci, Jason Copland, Riley Rossmo

What happens when OCP pulls the plug on the machine they created? As Robocop's systems go down, a paralyzed Alex Murphy must watch as Detroit burns beneath criminal excess. But OCP is about to learn a brutal lesson about the man they put inside the machine when Murphy takes control. Robotic justice is coming to the guilty and no one can stop it.



SERENITY NOW: JOSS WHEDON'S WORLD OF COMICS

by Gavin Lees

There's a horribly cynical myth pervading our culture that says that comic books are nothing more than elaborate television pitches and movie storyboards, and that they've only found mainstream acceptance because Hollywood has learned how to capitalize upon them. Not only does this completely denigrate the art form, but it ignores what's actually happening in the world of moving pictures. Yes, there have certainly been some successful films and TV shows based on comics, but as anyone who has seen Zack Snyder's *Watchmen* will tell you, that success is usually dependent upon not using the comics as a storyboard.

So, it seems somehow natural that Joss Whedon, the same person who directed 2012's most successful comics adaptation — *The Avengers*, for those of you who have just joined us — is also responsible for bucking that perceived trend, and turning popular TV and movie properties into not just successful, but critically acclaimed comics series.

It's with great fanfare, then, that Dark Horse is launching not one, but three new "Whedonverse" series in 2014: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season 10*; *Angel & Faith*; and *Serenity: Leaves on the Wind*.

While Joss himself is taking a back-seat, executive-producer role on these series, the creators involved are no strangers to these characters. Indeed, the line-up of artists is something of a musical chairs game, with Georges Jeanty (artist of the last two seasons of *Buffy*) working on *Serenity*; Rebekah Issacs (who previously worked on *Angel & Faith*) now penciling *Buffy*; and Will Conrad (who drew the first two *Serenity* miniseries) has moved onto the *Angel & Faith* team. That kind of pedigree should set expectations suitably high and, as editor Scott Allie states, "These are all artists Joss and the writers and I are comfortable working with, and who are cozy with these





characters, so it's nice to shake things up a bit while having a lot of confidence in what these artists can do."

With such valuable cultural properties, it can be no small feat in finding the correct writers to suitably capture the series' voices, and make the work still feel part of that ongoing, ever-expanding universe. Fans can rest easy that Christos Gage — fresh from his two-year run on *Angel & Faith*, as well as Marvel's *Age of Ultron* saga — is picking up his pen for the next season of *Buffy*. "It's a tremendous honor for Joss and Dark Horse to trust us with their flagship book," says Gage, "and we are going to do all we can to be worthy of that trust. It's a new season, with new rules... but hopefully the same blend of love, action, horror, humor, and creativity that's made *Buffy* and her Scoobies part of all our families."

Taking over from Gage on *Angel & Faith* is Victor Gischler, who previously wrote the *Spike* miniseries in 2012, but is perhaps best known for his irreverent run on *Deadpool: Merc With a Mouth* for Marvel.

Perhaps the most exciting news is reserved for *Serenity*. Whereas previous series had filled-in the gaps between the *Firefly* TV series and the *Serenity* movie — because, let's face it, everybody misses Wash — *Leaves on the Wind* will be the official, canonical continuation of the storyline. Not only that, but it will be written by Zack Whedon who, with brother Joss, wrote the *Shepherd's Tale* spin-off, which really showed what a *Serenity* comic could be. Allie explains, "We've been dying to get more *Serenity* out ever since the book Joss and Zack wrote. This story is the first giant step past the film, after the big damn heroes stuck a big middle finger in the face of the Alliance. Zack establishes new ground rules for these characters. He nails the voices, takes the relationships to the next level, and just gives us all the best space romp since the film Joss made."

Serenity: Leaves on the Wind will arrive in stores on 29th January, with *Buffy* following

behind on 19th March, and *Angel & Faith* on 2nd April. For those who have yet to experience their favourite shows in comics form, this leaves plenty of time for them to catch-up. What follows, then, is a guide to some of the key comics work by Joss Whedon both in and out of his Whedonverse:

FRAY

Although not branded as such, *Fray* was the first spin-off comic from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, published during its seventh and final (television) series. Set in the 23rd century, it follows Melaka Fray as she discovers her destiny to be the new Slayer. Although vampires have been banished from the earth — it turns out that people don't even know what a vampire is — the demons are slowly creeping back into our world, and once more we must look to a young girl to save us. Although this plotline sounds like money for old rope, Whedon switches it up by placing Melaka firmly within the sci-fi genre. Her world is the vertical metropolis of Moebius's "The Long Tomorrow" replete with flying cars, clones, mutants, and other impossible technology.

Whedon is not only genre- but also medium-savvy and knows what tropes he is playing with here. While TV's Sunnyvale is a satire of the horror genre's every town suburbs, his future world is a dystopic look

at where the imagination of Silver Age comics might lead us. It's probably also no coincidence that Karl Moline's art on the series heavily resembles Richard Corben's work for Warren Comics, symbolically replacing those scantily-clad space maidens with one of Whedon's trademark kick-ass female protagonists.

Melaka's experience becoming a Slayer helped to build upon the mythology that the TV show had created, and even intersected with it at appropriate times — *Fray* introduces us to the Slayer's scythe, just as Buffy was pulling hers King Arthur-like from a rock in Sunnyvale. She also went on to become a more pivotal character in the *Buffy* comics, further breaking down the notion that we could ever separate the comics from the TV shows.



ASTONISHING X-MEN

Having clearly shown that he could write as well for the page as he could for the screen, Whedon was invited to begin a run on

a new, out-of-continuity *X-Men* title that Marvel was specifically reviving for him. While commandeering a flagship property for Marvel is unusual, as far as second writing jobs go, the *X-Men* were clearly the best fit for Whedon's voice and creative vision.

He has gone on record many times that the principal influence behind *Buffy Summers* was *Kitty Pride*. So, it was no surprise to find her at the forefront of his

run, and the emotional crux that made the return of Colossus so much more moving than any of Jean Grey's inevitable resurrections. Again, he showed that he knew the tropes — even the clichés — and could play them for all that they're worth.

Astonishing X-Men was more than just playful one-up-manship, though, it managed to be a rock-solid take on the characters, exploring those themes of alienation, empowerment, and liberation that are practically synonyms for Whedon's work. Paired with John Cassaday on the book's art, it was no wonder that it was nominated for several Eisner awards — partially compensating for the delays that the series suffered due to the workloads of its authors.

As well as exploring the established roster of characters, *Astonishing* also introduced us to several new players, who have gone to become integral parts of the Marvel Universe — S.W.O.R.D., Blindfold, and Ord of the Breakworld. Although it lasted a scant 25 issues, Whedon's run left an indelible mark on the *X-Men* which can still clearly be seen today.

SERENITY

The fortunes of Whedon's *Firefly* television series are tragic enough to inspire their own ballad. Expecting another Buffy, critics and viewers alike found it difficult to

warm to the blend of Wild West outlaws and space-hopping sci-fi. Thrown haphazardly into a Fox schedule dominated by reality TV at the height of its popularity, it was doomed to fail and, indeed, was cancelled after only 11 of its 14 episodes had aired.

Like the best legends, however, killing it only made it stronger. A passionate cult following emerged, who seemed to stop at nothing to have their beloved show reinstated. After the movie *Serenity* was more

favourably received, Whedon began to tie the two entities together through comics. Using unaired script ideas, he plotted two mini-series: *Those Left Behind* and *Better Days* (which were scripted by Brett Matthews and illustrated by Will Conrad) and a graphic novella *The Shepherd's Tale* (written with his brother Zack, and illustrated by Chris Samnee).

The critical ire that was levelled at the TV series seemed somewhat quelled at this point, with *Better Days* receiving

a Hugo nomination, and the fan reception healthy enough to prompt Dark Horse to publish the title on a more regular basis. This is perhaps as close as fans will come to a sequel for some time.

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

If *Firefly* was Whedon's little engine that could, then *Buffy* is his unstoppable juggernaut. The TV series was an



enormous success — surpassing almost everyone's expectations — and is undoubtedly Whedon's signature creation. After the series finished in 2003, Dark Horse toyed with putting out *Buffy*-based anthology comics called *Tales of the Vampires* which paired the show's creator and some of its writers alongside up-and-coming comics artists like Cameron Stewart and Jeff Parker. As an experiment, it certainly proved that the Buffyverse could be comfortably contained in the comics page.

Then, in 2007, in an unprecedented move, Dark Horse announced that *Buffy* would officially continue as a comics series, entirely overseen and often written by Joss Whedon. Of course, there was trepidation because this was “merely” a comic book, and didn't have the appeal of featuring the actual actors from the show. Given Whedon's track record, it was no surprise when *Season Eight* managed to completely overturn those concerns. For a start, the comic expanded the scope of Buffy's world to a scale that would be impossible to realize on a television budget — a worldwide network of Slayers from Scotland to Italy to Japan; an enormous ensemble cast of characters; and an amped-up Willow whose magic could only be believable in the conversation that exists between a comic and its reader.

For all its wild imagination, *Season Eight* concludes with the end of magic in the

world. It seemed like a logical move, as what people connected with in *Buffy* was not the horror or fantasy, but the characters and their struggles. With that in mind, when Dark Horse began to publish *Season Nine*, it was a return to more familiar territory, focusing on Buffy's burden of responsibility as a Slayer in San Francisco.

This series also generated a spin-off — *Angel & Faith* — which brought that TV show's cast of characters into the world of

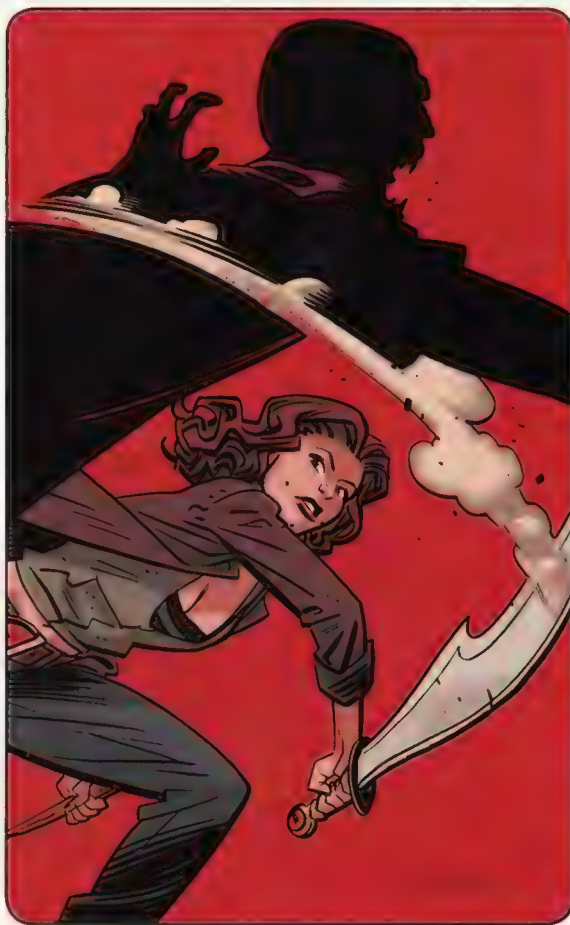
comics. Although IDW had previously published *Angel* comics, this was the first official continuation of the series, and with both titles existing at the same publisher, it allowed for greater crossover between the two.

As the series progressed, and Whedon's film commitments began to take over, he ceded greater creative control to the writers. Although it was primarily screenwriters who were working on the Buffyverse comics (most notably Andrew Chambliss and Jane Espenson,)

comics writers like Christos Gage and Victor Gischler began to arrive, and brought a more visual voice to the comics that helped to fully ensconce Buffy in the panel-bordered world.

RUNAWAYS

Among the writers brought onto *Buffy* was Brian K. Vaughan in a move that surprised entirely no-one, as only a few months



before Vaughan had retired from his successful tenure on *Runaways* for Marvel, to be replaced by Joss Whedon.

For all the acclaim he had received for *X-Men*, this was an entirely different proposition altogether — replacing the creator of an original series, who left at the height of the book's popularity — it must have felt like trying to perform Sinatra's encore for him. Thankfully the book was prime Whedon territory. A group of teenagers — mainly female — discover that they're different from everyone else because their parents are super villains, and they have superpowers. Throw in some genre-busting stabs at superhero culture — no code-names, no costumes, and a catchphrase that's simply, "Try not to die" — and it's no wonder that Whedon was already a fan before he started writing it.

Although he only stayed on the title for six issues, in what most would consider a minor run, it's nonetheless an interesting work to see Whedon as a work-for-hire writer on a property that doesn't hold the nostalgic resonance of *X-Men*, and was created by a writer who also bridges the worlds of television and comics.

SUGARSHOCK!

For all the acclaim that *Buffy* and *X-Men* garnered, they are possibly not Whedon's greatest achievement in comics. For that,

we can probably turn to this oft-overlooked gem from 2007. Originally published online through Dark Horse's partnership with MySpace (ask your parents what that was) *Sugarshock!* saw Whedon collaborate with little-known Brazilian artist Fabio Moon — before he worked with Matt Fraction, or won Eisner awards.

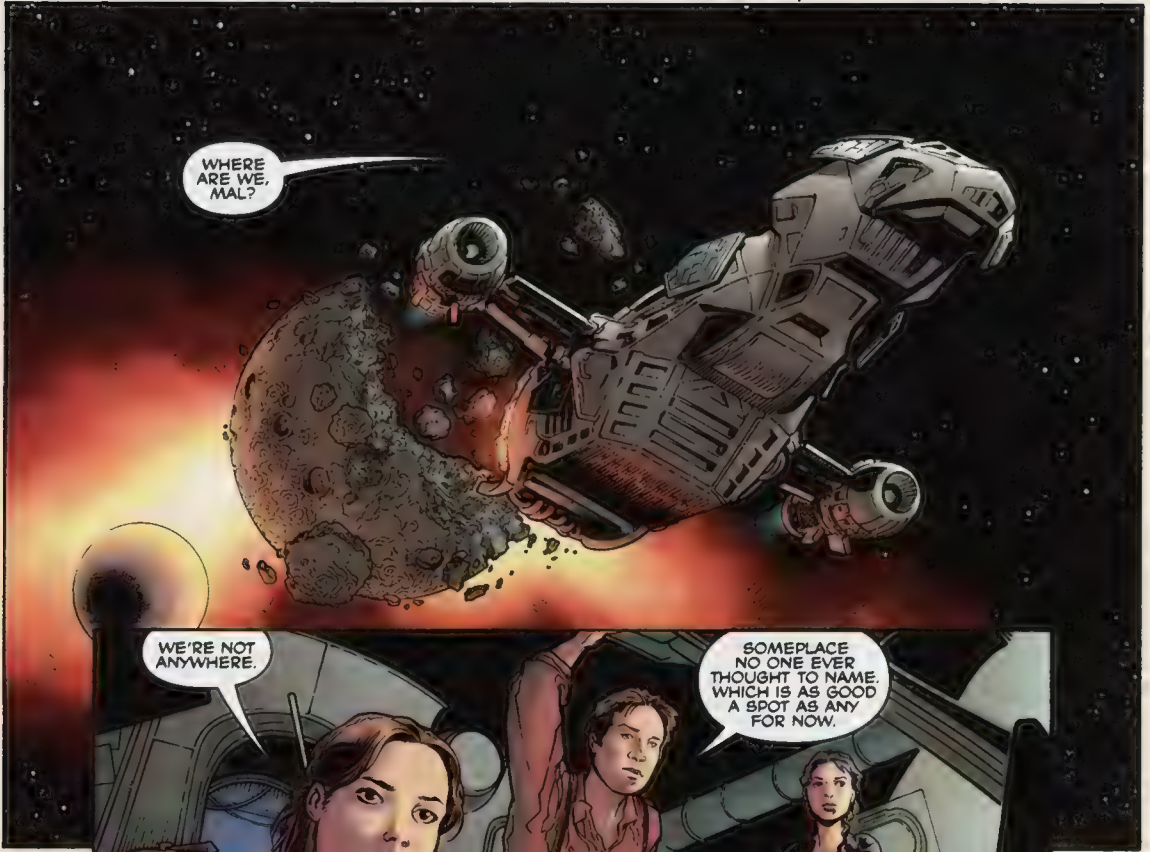
It's a simple, fun story about a garage rock band — where better to find the strong, feisty, outsider characters that Whedon is

so fond of — that become embroiled in an intergalactic battle of the bands. This reveals certain members of the band to be more than they appear, or causes us to question whether they are in fact insane. There's no clumsy exposition — all we need to know can be picked-up from the snappy banter between the characters — this is simply a balls-to-the-wall, two-minute, three-chord punk song splashed down on the page.

Moon's inky brushstrokes are the perfect accompani-

ment, being both energetic and stylish. This doesn't feel like a comic produced by a successful Hollywood director, it feels like a youthful work of unfettered imagination, by someone who's excited to find their voice and eager to see what they can get away with in a comic. It's completely unpretentious, and unassuming — a glimpse of the real Joss Whedon, free from the burdens of fame and hype. And it's kinda perfect.





WHERE ARE WE, MAL?



WE'RE NOT ANYWHERE.

SOMEPLACE NO ONE EVER THOUGHT TO NAME. WHICH IS AS GOOD A SPOT AS ANY FOR NOW.



HOW LONG DO YOU PLAN ON STAYING NOWHERE?

LONG AS WE NEED.



WE CAN'T RUN FOREVER.

WE'RE NOT RUNNING.

WELL THEN, THIS IS THE WORST VACATION I'VE EVER BEEN ON.

YOU GUYS FIGHT A LOT.



FIVE YEARS LATER – DC COMICS' BIG EVENT FOR 2014

by Rich Johnston



As a British comic book reader, I'm used to the concept of the weekly comic book. That's what every comic was when I was growing up, comedy anthologies for kids like *The Beano* and *The Dandy*, the science fiction action comics like *2000AD*, even the Marvel UK titles like *The Fantastic Four*, *Spider-Man*, and *The X-Men* were all weekly. I loved them, and looked forward to picking up a small stack every week with my pocket money. Today, I buy *The Phoenix* for my kids and am insanely jealous that this wasn't available for me when I was eight.

But weeklies never really seemed to work in the US market. There have been experiments, *Marvel Comics Presents* for a few years, DC turned *Action Comics* into a weekly for a short time, and more recently yearlong weekly books such as *52* and *Countdown* served a specific event.

But now they're back. This year, DC Comics is looking to start a number of new weekly superhero titles. At the time of writing, we know about *Batman Eternal*, a new weekly Batman title that will tell ongoing stories including, among many items, the return of Stephanie Brown to the Batman universe and all the squeeing fangirls that will bring with it. Originally planned to start last year, there are also rumours of a Superman weekly book to join the line. It's seen as a way to build up the weekly comic book customer, as well as prop up market share and sales, exploiting well-known names and getting more people coming in every week to buy the comic – and anything else they fancy.

But Bleeding Cool has also been teasing *Five Years Later*, a project our website first revealed the existence of last year, and that DC Comics then teased in one of their All Access videos.



As of now, we think we know that it is a weekly comic book spinning out of DC's September event month in 2014, with every title in DC's New 52 line jumping forward in time by five years for one month.

But because this is comic book time, five years later, is a point that the titles are never actually going to reach in fifty years of stories. The main cast will stay in their early/mid-twenties age range forever. But *Five Years Later* will allow people to break out of that, into a late twenties/early thirties range. So, while the New 52 may have banned marriage amongst its characters (aside from Animal Man, who is



going for separation instead), in *Five Years Later*, all the limitations are off. Expect a married Superman and Wonder Woman, expect a married Batwoman and Maggie Taylor. It's only for one month and it satisfies all sorts of fanboy demands.



And spinning out of that event will be the weekly series *Five Years Later*, written by Jeff Lemire, Keith Giffen, Dan Jurgens, and Brian Azzarello, telling continuing tales in the *Five Years Later* world.



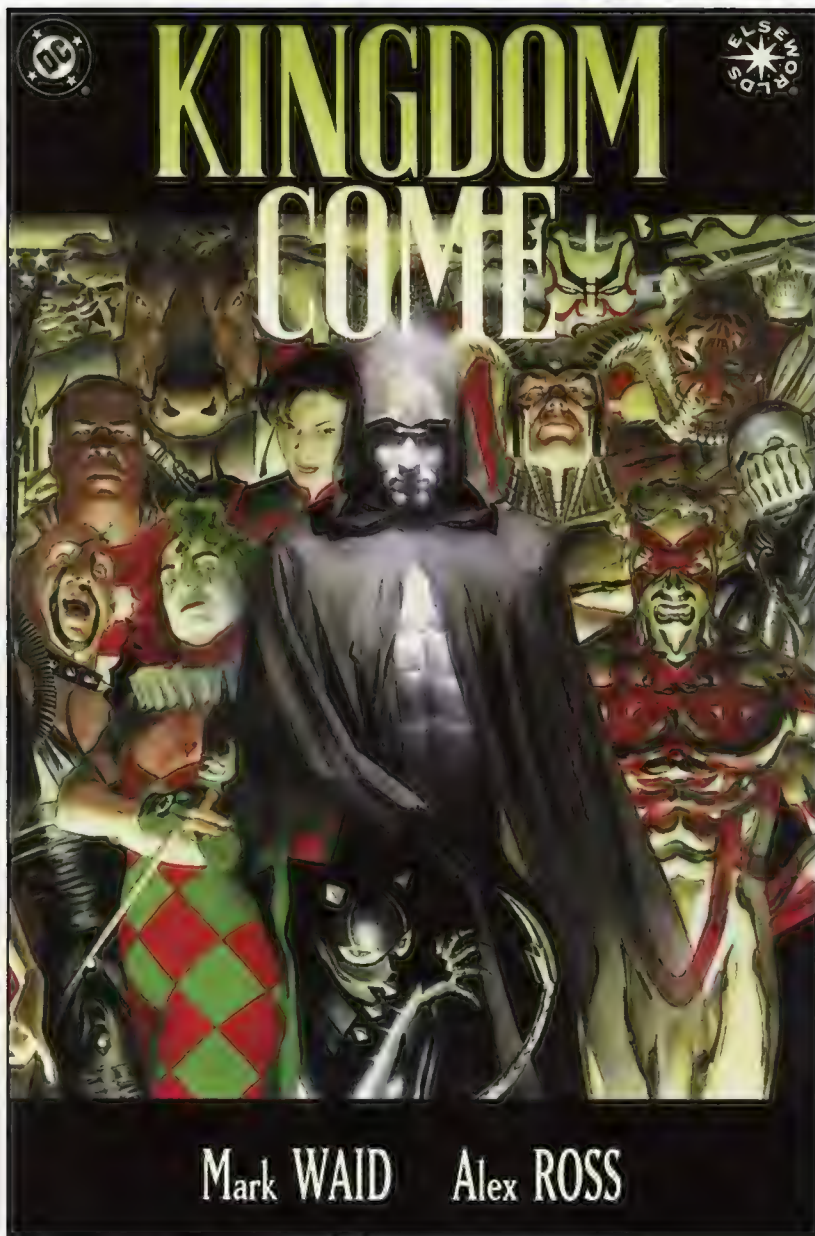
The project began for the creators in June last year, during a secret DC writers creative summit held to coincide with a screening of



Man Of Steel, which was a handy excuse to bring in a bunch of creators for a big meeting without too many people getting suspicious.

Over three days, Dan DiDio and the editorial team brainstormed with the proposed writers, then Greg Rucka, Jeff Lemire, Keith Giffen, Dan Jurgens, and Brian Keene. The project was intended to "legitimise his legacy" of the New 52 relaunch with the aim of offering a "reason why the old continuity is never coming back and closing that door forever." The launch of the New 52 had been a little rushed, went through many amends, and wasn't as cohesive as they might have liked. And the history of the old DC universe was either in flux or had been removed. This project was intended to fix that, telling tales of past DC adventurers from Kamandi and Arion and Anthro to Enemy Ace and Sgt. Rock

Sources have reported a multitude of differing story-lines, everything from a



will involve time traveling, both to the DC New 52 present and around the New 52 universe, its past and future. So characters like Booster Gold will be up front and central, as well as the Batman from *Batman Beyond*. Cyborg and Mr Terrific will also lead the book.

It will also begin with the death of a major DC Comics character. At one point, that was to have been the John Stewart Green Lantern, which led Joshua Hale Fialkov to leave his *Green Lantern Corps* book in protest, but later that changed to Green Arrow. However, this too may have changed since then, after the stellar success of the TV series *Arrow*.

There are many similarities to the famous pitch by Alan Moore to DC Comics for a crossover event called *Twilight Of The Superheroes*. In that

plague of giant monsters to Superman going bad (ala Miracle Man) to a massive Rapture-like disappearance of people worldwide, all in the mix.

Just before San Diego Comic Con, Greg Rucka and Brian Keene left due to conflicting project issues and Brian Azzarello came on to replace them.

Then, in August, the plans for the *Five Years Later* aspect to the book solidified.

And just because the book is set *Five Years Later*, don't expect that to be the only time zone being explored. Part of the story

proposal, bought by DC Comics but never followed through as Moore fell out with the publisher, John Constantine becomes aware of a dark superheroic future, with a world divided into houses, a House Of Steel, headed by Superman and a renamed Wonder Woman, Superwoman, his wife. There were also Houses of Thunder, Titans, Secrets, Mystery, Justice, Tomorrow, and Lanterns. And it all began with the death of Captain Marvel.

That proposal had informed other series, such as Mark Waid and Alex Ross'

Kingdom Come, and of late, there had been signs that DC Comics were referencing that story more directly, bringing Constantine back in contact with superheroes, putting Superman and Wonder Woman together and recognising the threat that this may pose to some.

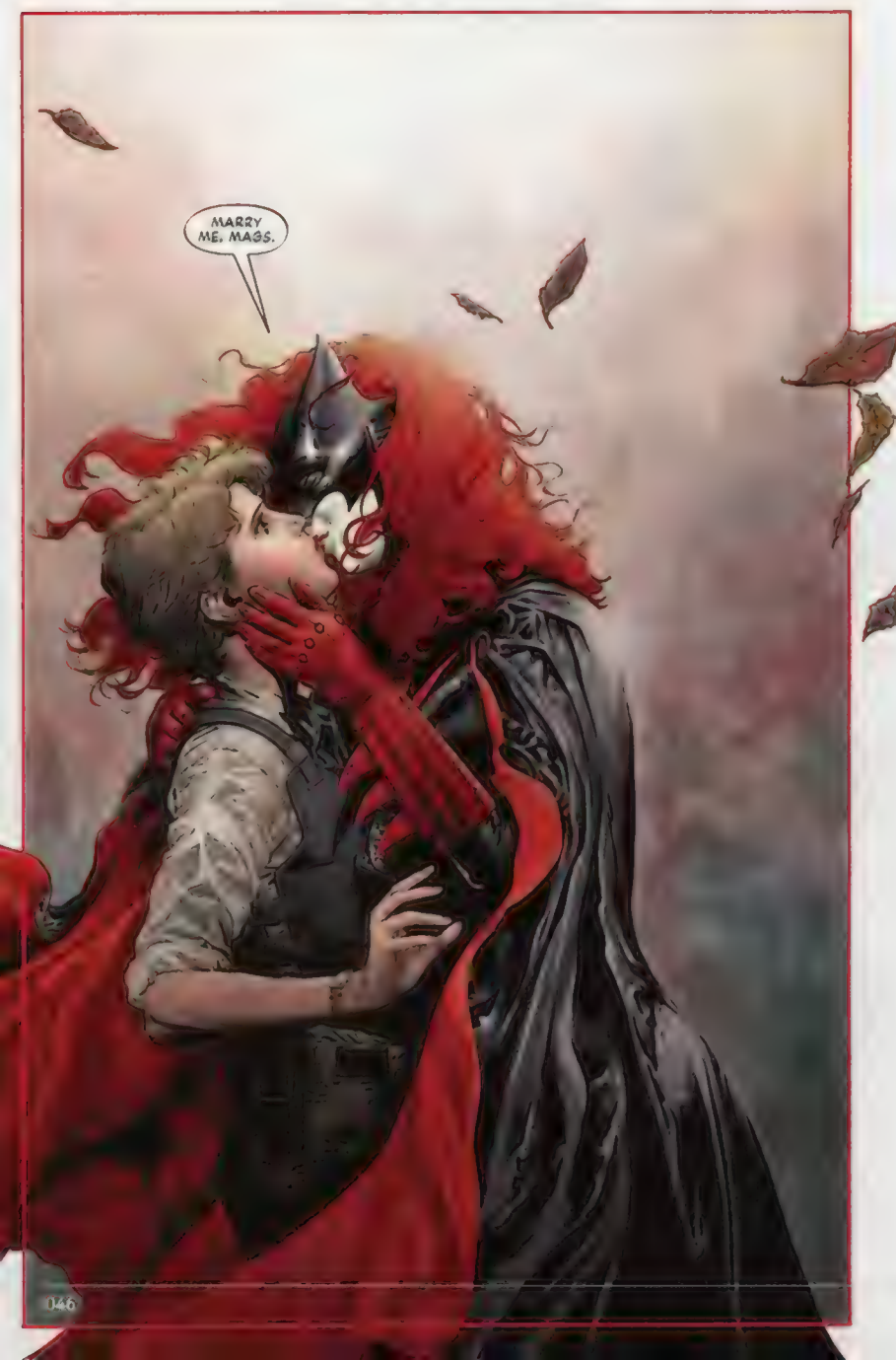
The event is due, I'm told, is to launch with Free Comic Book Day. Just as in previous years, DC Comics has teased the future events of *Trinity War*. Even though, internally, the nature of what *Trinity War* was

changed a number of times since then, that scene stayed sacrosanct and appeared in *Justice League* pretty much as it was originally, minus a hairstyle and resultant gender identity for the new Atom. And so it will be in May, with scenes from September given their first airing, their first preview, and encouraging all sorts of fan speculation. Bleeding Cool expects to be speculating along with everyone else.

As of writing, the only official note that we have had of *Five Years Later* is a quick

scene in the DC All Access video, a series of *Five Years Later* logos next to a head sketch of Batman Beyond, and an indication that it was an upcoming weekly series. But Bleeding Cool has been able to tell you so much much more. Let's see if we're right? And if so... will you want to read it? Use the web address on this article and tell us what you think, what you'd expect, what you'd want. Because do you know what? The staff at DC Comics will very likely be reading it...

Of course, we've also got to get past the *Return Of Damian Wayne* and the *Earth Prime/Earth 2 War* first...



LOKI RETURNS TO RAGNAROK AND ROLL

An Interview With Eric Esquivel
By Joshua Kopin

Eric Esquivel has been making comics since, as a teenager, he started self-publishing. Much more recently, he has begun making what he calls “dad money,” writing books for Moonstone, Zenescope, and Monkey Brain. In February, he launches a new project, *Loki: Ragnarok and Roll*, for BOOM!

CAN YOU INTRODUCE US FIRST TO YOURSELF, AND THEN TO THE WORLD OF *LOKI: RAGNAROK AND ROLL*?

Erik: This is my eleventh year writing comics, but I’ve just recently started making real, actual, dad-level money doin’ it. Other work your readers might know me from includes *Blackest Terror* (Moonstone) *Bravest Warriors* #13 (KABOOM!), *BOO! #3* (Monkeybrain), *Freelancers* (BOOM!) *Grimm Fairy Tales: The Dark Queen* (Zenescope), *Thor: Unkillable Thunder Christ* (Moonstone), and some other stuff I’m purposefully not going to mention

because it’d embarrass my mother.

Loki: Ragnarok and Roll is a meditation on the idea that humanity has stopped looking to the Heavens for its Gods, and started scrolling through Tumblr.

Time was when our “heroes” were all demigods—human/deity hybrids whose powers and virtues arose from the fact that they shared a couple of drops of blood with divinity (aka “the ruling class”). Even guys

like Jesus and Indra, whose beginnings were as humble as you could get, inevitably rose to positions of influence basically just because of who their dads were. Nowadays we don’t call that heroic, we call that nepotism. Entitlement. Class war.

Loki, in this story, is a dude who is kicked outta Heaven by his father, washes up at a seedy, underground Goth bar in downtown Los Angeles, and quickly discovers that he prefers it to home.

He puts together a ragtag band of misfits (his own tattooed, transgender little Avengers) and quickly makes a name for himself writing anarchist anthems for angry young rebels with daddy issues.





YOUR BIBLIOGRAPHY HAS A LOT OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF BOOKS; ARE THERE CERTAIN IDEAS THAT YOU'RE INTERESTED IN USING THE MEDIUM OF COMICS TO PURSUE?

When I was a teenager I started self-publishing comics under the banner "Modern Mythology Press". The thought behind that name was that comics are my generation's folklore—secular parables for a wave of cynical, militantly atheist 90's kids. And I used to think that we were better than religion, because we never declared a Holy War and murdered anybody...but then the "Joker" shootings happened in Aurora, and some guys started dressing up like superheroes and pepper spraying peaceful protestors in Seattle... so I've recently had to reconcile with the fact that we're just like everybody else...and how beautiful and weird that is...

IF YOU WERE WORKING IN ANOTHER MEDIUM, DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT PURSUE THOSE THINGS DIFFERENTLY?

I honestly don't care about anything in the world except for comic books. I am a machine designed for a very specific purpose. Like a heat seeking missile, or one of those butterflies who only lives for three days but manages to pollinate a bunch of junk before it circles the drain of eternity.

I'M CURIOUS ABOUT HOW YOU'VE USED THE WEB IN YOUR OWN WORK— THE *THOR* BOOK HAD A KICKSTARTER, AND MONKEYBRAIN IS A DIGITAL FIRST PUBLISHER. HOW MUCH CONSIDERATION TO THE WEB DO YOU GIVE WHEN YOU'RE PREPARING A NEW PROJECT? IS WRITING A DIGITAL COMIC DIFFERENT THAN WRITING FOR PRINT?

Not for me. A lot of my fascination with comics stems from the fact that very little has changed about the words-and-pictures medium since the Cave Paintings of Lascaux. I like being a participant in that grand tradition.

Whenever anybody tries to "improve" the delivery system of comics it just comes off as immediately dated and embarrasses everybody. Remember "motion comics?" Those damn things set the perception of our industry back, like, fifteen years. "Oh, comics are just terrible cartoons...?"

DO YOU HAVE A DREAM PROJECT, EITHER ONE THAT'S IN THE WORKS OR AN IDEA OR CHARACTER THAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO WORK ON?

Are your eyes going to roll too far back into your head if I say that this is my dream job?

Loki: Ragnarok And Roll stars some of the best Gods and heroes mankind has ever dreamt up. As much of a fan as I am of Superman, Captain America, The Rocketeer,

and all the rest—nobody ever built a temple to those guys. I'm crafting original stories about figures who people literally worshipped.

It's like getting paid to write *The New Testament*.

TELL ME A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF *LOKI: RAGNAROK AND ROLL*—HOW IS IT CONNECTED TO *THOR: UNKILLABLE THUNDER CHRIST*?

Thor: *Unkillable Thunder Christ*—as your readers may or may not know—was a one-shot I published through Moonstone a little over a year ago, before anybody outside of Arizona had any idea who I was. I treated it like a 22 page manifesto containing everything that I, at the time, believed about comics, life, and God (like there's any difference between the three). It was a labor of pure love, and one that I managed to lose a bunch of money on despite a successful Kickstarter campaign. But I was okay with that—because I had finally put a comic that I was proud of out into the world ...something that I could unashamedly give to editors as an example of what I was capable of.

And I did. And BOOM! dug it. And after testing me out on books like *Freelancers*, *Bravest Warriors*, and *Adventure Time*, they asked me to pitch something in the same vein. And that's how *Loki: Ragnarok And Roll* was born.

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THAT COMIC, AND HOW IS IT SIMILAR?

Iwrote the actual script for *Thor: Unkillable Thunder Christ* about three years ago, back when I was in the habit of getting into completely avoidable street brawls on a regular basis...and it shows. *Thunder Christ* is all about the honesty and the immediacy of violence, and the fantasy of being able

to pray to a God who'd rather bludgeon his enemies to death with a hammer than allow himself to be nailed to a cross by them. *Loki: Ragnarok and Roll* is an infinitely more complex animal—literally four times as long and about three hundred times more dense (the cast spans every pantheon recognized by man—Greek, Indian, West African, etc., etc.). It's still about strength—but this time the strength of language. It's about the idea that a disgruntled employee with an email account can topple the darkest Orwellian efforts of The N.S.A., that a bunch of teenagers with Twitter and a tormented copy of *V for Vendetta* can grind Wallstreet to a halt. It's about The Future.

The current generation is doing things the 60's hippies never dreamed of. They deserve a God as cool as they are. Loki is that God.

DO YOU HAVE OTHER HEROES THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PURSUING IN THIS WAY?

Oh, yeah. Totally. I'm fascinated by the idea that these guys are still relevant hundreds of years after their stories were first told.

Seriously: really think about that for a minute. Isn't that insane?

No matter how far we come as a species, we're always going to have the exact same struggles to deal with: competing with our siblings, atoning with our parents, becoming villains as we overstay our welcome, and resist the next wave of heroes whose job it is to tear everything down and start again. It's always going to be exactly the same.

Our Gods are really just the first folks who dealt with all of this stuff and survived to tell the tale. We don't worship them because of what they can do—we're interested in them because of what they have done. They've been there, done that, got the t-shirt. They're our first role models.

My whole career is about recognizing,

and celebrating, that cycle. Because it makes humanity seem smaller. It makes everyone suddenly relatable. It makes us all family.

ARE THERE SIMILAR PROJECTS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED YOU HERE? I'M THINKING LESS OF MARVEL'S *THOR* PROPERTIES (WE'LL GET THERE IN A MINUTE) AND MORE OF BOOKS LIKE VERTIGO'S *LUCIFER* OR OTHER PROJECTS THAT UPDATED PUBLIC DOMAIN OR MYTHIC CHARACTERS. WHAT'S INTERESTING ABOUT DOING THAT KIND OF UPDATING?

Not really. *Loki: Ragnarok and Roll* isn't about reinventing the wheel. We might as well make up our own myth set at that point, like Jack Kirby and *The Fourth World*, it's about adding to the mythology that everyone already knows and loves.

I don't think that I'm capable of creating a better Loki than the one that already exists—but I sure as hell know that nobody has told this particular story with him before. I'm not as interested in updating him as I am in dropping him into an updated world, and watching him stay true to himself as he navigates his way through uncharted territory.

WHAT DO YOU THINK PEOPLE FIND WHEN THEY START LOOKING FOR HEROES ON TUMBLR (OR, MAYBE EVEN MORE CRUCIALLY, ON BUZZFEED)? DO YOU THINK THAT OUR HEROES ARE DIFFERENT IN WAYS OTHER THAN HOW WE FIND THEM AND HOW THEY COME TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS HEROES? DO THEY HAVE PARTICULAR, OR DIFFERENT, KINDS OF VIRTUES?

First and foremost: it's relatability. People naturally gravitate towards stories about ordinary people accomplishing the extraordinary.

Folks enjoy when the math doesn't add up—when someone who has no business dreaming as big as they do pulls off

the impossible... Because somewhere in the remainder of that equation is the proof that magic exists. We like Jay-Z because he started out on the streets dealing drugs, and ended up at Obama fund raisers singing duets with Beyoncé. We like Jesus because he was born on a pile of dirty goats in a crappy manger in the middle of nowhere, yet still managed to become such a threat to the establishment they had him publicly executed.

Thor will never be as heroic as Loki, because Thor has every reason to succeed. He was born with a hammer in his hand and a silver spoon in his mouth. He's a self-destructive heir apparent whose only obstacle in life is his own ego. He's the Paris Hilton of immortals. Loki is a superhero just for getting through the day without slashing his wrists. The deck is stacked against him in every conceivable way (his dad is embarrassed of him, his brother constantly kicks the crap out of him to impress his friends, he has the least flashy superpower—talking pretty—of any god in the history of gods), and that's why we feel for him.

It's important to human beings that our heroes have an arc, because that's how we make sense of struggle. Human beings are only capable of enduring hardship if they can rationalize it.

LOKI IS A CHARACTER THAT FANS SEEM TO CARE DEEPLY ABOUT, EVEN THOUGH HE IS OFTEN THE VILLAIN RATHER THAN THE HERO. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS? DID YOU CONSIDER THAT AT ALL IN THE WRITING OF *RAGNAROK AND ROLL*?

Loki is his father's least favorite son. He's the kid nobody bet on. No one ever handed him anything—but that's a gift. When nobody offers you what you deserve you learn real quick how to take what's yours. Loki will do anything it takes to escape the role that has been thrust upon him. He's unrelenting. In a world that tries

its damndest to make us all into zombified, nine-to-five worker drones, that's a god we can believe in

DO YOU THINK IT SPEAKS TO SOMETHING IN THIS SHIFT TO TUMBLR THAT YOU'VE SPOKEN ABOUT?

Ido, yeah. I think people are starting to realize that the meek have actually inherited the Earth. We live in a world wherein brute strength is basically meaningless—but our ability to instantaneously communicate with each other has made us more powerful than any of us had ever dreamed. And there are people within that paradigm who know how to play just the right notes/sing just the right lyrics to ignite a revolution.

We're living in the Age of Loki.

I'M INTERESTED IN THE WAY THAT YOUR BOOK CONNECTS WITH OTHER DEPICTIONS OF THOR AND LOKI. OBVIOUSLY, THE MARVEL MOVIES ARE HUGE, AND TUMBLR IS CROWDED WITH FANS OF KIERON GILLEN AND JAMIE MCKELVIE'S *YOUNG AVENGERS*—HOW ARE YOUR CHARACTERS SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT TO THOSE DEPICTIONS? WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR BOOKS ADD TO THE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THESE CHARACTERS?

Mine are actually gods.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe stuff is really, really fun—but their Loki and Thor aren't divine. They're space aliens, and all of their miraculous trappings are the result of cringe-worthy pseudo-science mumbo jumbo. They've lost all of the awe-inducing wonder of the source material. All of the magic. It's a bummer.

And Gillen and McKelvie are two of my favorite human beings working in comics (anyone who hasn't read *Phonogram* yet should go out and remedy that right now)—but their "Loki" is a cutesy little eleven year old boy. He has more in common with Dennis The Menace than with

the apocalypse-courting, invincible badass I know from *The Poetic Edda*.

IS THERE SOMETHING PARTICULARLY INTERESTING ABOUT WORKING WITH CHARACTERS WHO HAVE A HISTORY THAT GOES FURTHER BACK THAN THE 20TH CENTURY? DO YOU THINK THAT CHARACTERS LIKE THOR OR LOKI ARE MORE RESONANT THAN CHARACTERS WHO HAVE ONLY RECENTLY ENTERED THE CULTURAL LEXICON?

The idea that the "characters" I'm writing about aren't real is a relatively new one. If you went back to ancient times and told the Vikings that their gods originated inside of a human skull they'd look at you in as much disbelief as a modern person would if you told them that you thought your car radio wrote the new Lady Gaga single.

There's an unbelievable momentum attached to the idea of Loki—a force that started motion before any of us were born and will continue on far after we're all dead. I'm proud to channel it for a while.



2014 – TWELVE MOVIES IN TWELVE MONTHS

by **Brendon Connelly**

I have a calendar of scheduled release dates for 2014's movies. It's pretty tightly stuffed, but mostly with delicious looking things. It seems like we're going to be in for a good movie year.

Rather than take you through the full roster, though, I'm going to pull one picture from each calendar month. If that sounds like a pointlessly arbitrary system, I guess it is, but it should also mean that if you'll be joining me in checking out each of the following movies as the year goes on, there will always be something else to look forward to. Well, until December 12th, at least.

Oh, and when it comes to putting these films into particular months, I was going by US wide release dates. And I've deliberately crossed off anything I've already seen as well as *The Muppets Most Wanted*. Because that was just too obvious.

You may also wish to note that a lot of smaller films don't have release dates scheduled as yet so I was restricted, mostly, to choosing from the bigger upcoming films whether I liked it or not.

JANUARY: TIM'S VERMEER

The directorial debut of Teller, Penn's smaller, quieter, equally magical chum, was over five years in the making but traces a story that goes back the 17th Century. Many have speculated that the Dutch master Johannes Vermeer used a device called The Camera Obscura to make his paintings - essentially a giant camera without the photosensitive paper or sensor, requiring Vermeer to be inside in their stead and to "paint over" the image created by light coming in through the lens. Teller's friend Tim Jenison wanted to test this by trying to build his own Camera Obscura, and Teller tracked his progress.

This is already a well-lauded movie with great reviews piling up after its festival screenings. And if it sounds a bit dry from the description above then I've done it a terrible disservice because Tim's Vermeer has the reputation of being a very compelling, even exciting movie.

FEBRUARY: THE LEGO MOVIE



Directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller proved that they could give family films a truly twisted bent by dropping *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* on us, and after hardly a word on how wild and weird it might be. Given that they've now got the ever-changeable arena of Lego to play in, where lunatic mash-ups and limitless creativity are the order of the day, I can only start to imagine what sort of surreal hijinks they'll be offering.

And where many fans have said Christian Bale's interpretation of Batman was the one they were always waiting for, I'll admit that I'm partial to Will Arnett's conceited, demented Lego version, one and half inches tall but brimming with gruff-voiced vanity.

MARCH: VERONICA MARS

If you separate the movie from the Kickstarter kerfuffle - though I will tell you that I'm a backer and proud - then what you have here is the hard-won trophy to a long, arduous, uphill marathon run. For years now Mars' creator Rob Thomas and star Kristen Bell have battled to get a spin-off movie

made, some way to round-out plot lines and character arcs that were cruelly cut short on TV. Not only was *Veronica Mars* a great mystery-of-the-week detective show, it was populated by characters that the viewers really became invested in... only to find them all left out in the cold when season three was snipped off in its prime.

The bonus to the new plan is that by configuring this film as a fresh start, easily accessible to *Veronica* virgins, they could well be creating a new beginning for the character as well as giving the old story lines closure.

APRIL: CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER



Promising the now well-known Marvel blend of adventure, humour, and spectacle, *The Winter Soldier* is also supposed to deliver as a political thriller. Seems like a big ask, but Kevin Feige and crew are nothing if not ambitious. This also seems to be the Marvel: Phase Two movie most rooted

in the ongoing “mythology” so it’s likely to be the most essential stepping stone on our way to *Avengers: The Age of Ultron* also, and I don’t want anything to undermine my full enjoyment of that one.

MAY: GODZILLA

The original *Gojira* was a melancholy, serious melodrama that also featured a man in a rubber suit trampling on model cities. Now *Godzilla* himself has been upscaled to a full-CG creation, there shouldn’t be any awkward substrata of comedy and we’ll all be able to enjoy the widespread destruction and misery without any pesky irony nipping at our funny bones.

Gareth Edwards has ensured that his *Godzilla* movie is packed full of real, capable actors - Bryan Cranston, Juliette Binoche, Elizabeth Olsen - and I bet you anything they’ll be doing some of the most serious, weighty work you’ll ever find in a monster movie. The opposite end of the tonal spectrum from *Pacific Rim*, I think.

JUNE: 22 JUMP STREET

It’s *The Lego Movie*’s Phil Lord and Chris Miller, once more, taking Channing Tatum and Jonah Hill’s buddy cops not to high school this time but college. There’s a real sense of abandon with this team, and we should see it in full effect here, from expensive, explosive action scenes, to a barrage of smart-assed, self-referential gags. And there’s one big plot twist that should absolutely bring the house down, I think. I won’t spoil it here, but it’s a doozy.

No, nothing to do with The Statue of Liberty. Not that one. That’s next month...

JULY: DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

Rise of the Planet of the Apes showed a very modern, directly relevant way to tap into the Planet of the Apes ideas, and *Dawn* seems to be escalating everything nicely. All I ask is that the Apes themselves

are allowed to be the leading characters and aren't relegated to being supporting acts for the humans. Just that little bit of structure stands at odds with the very concept of these films, doesn't it?

On the most superficial level, I'm totally fascinated by WETA Digital's animated apes. Sometimes in the first film, Caesar looked living and breathing and utterly alive, and sometimes he did not. Could we be on for a repeat of *King Kong's* 100% photorealistic rendering throughout? It's quite breathtaking when it does come off.

AUGUST: *GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY*

Arguably Marvel's biggest risk since the original *Iron Man* and a film... I can't really say too much about right now. I will be filing a big report in a coming issue of *Bleeding Cool Magazine*, however, and the picture did make this list so, please, read into that what you will... while you're booking your tickets and shopping for a nice premiere-line tent.

SEPTEMBER: *THE BOXTROLLS*



The stop motion maestros of Laika are getting ready to reveal their third full feature after the peerless *Coraline* and hugely ambitious *Paranorman*. Both of the early teaser trailers for *The Boxtrolls* were strong evidence that Laika likes to do things their own way: the first by introducing same sex parents to their Victorian setting, the second by exposing the process by which a stop motion movie gets made.

The film is being based upon Alan Snow's book *Here Be Monsters!*, a volume

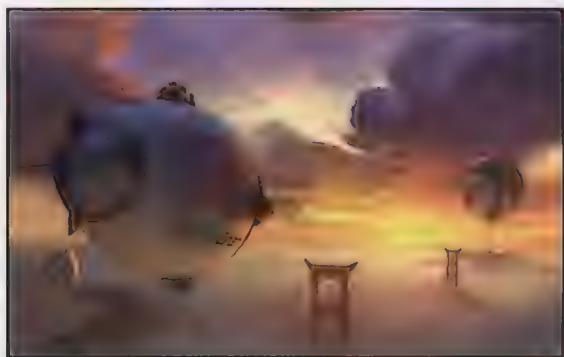
that I purchased and read specifically because Laika had optioned it, and there was a lot of obvious potential in Snow's story for wonderfully grand, gothic adventure. I think this film has a very real chance of becoming a cult favourite forever after.

OCTOBER: *THE INTERVIEW*

Seth Rogen and James Franco play a TV host and his producer caught up in a plot to assassinate Kim Jong Un. Of course they do. And of course there's going to be a lot of pot smoking, and many of the jokes will be about Franco's vanity and Rogen's continued uselessness. But this film has a particularly smart screenplay and, improvisation and editing notwithstanding, should comfortably end up feeling a lot more sophisticated than *This Is The End*.

I think *The Interview* is going to surprise a lot of people, if Rogen and co-director Evan Goldberg can just get the tone right.

NOVEMBER: *BIG HERO 6*



There are three Marvel movies on this list but *Big Hero 6* is the only one that doesn't take place in the Marvel Movieverse. And it's also the only one that's animated, being the next feature from Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Set in San Fransokyo, and mashing up American and Japanese styles and iconography accordingly, this is a pretty loose adaptation of the Scott Lobdell and Gus Vasquez miniseries, filtered through Disney's all-ages family filter. What we end up with

a story of a boy and his robot, and an evil villain using portals to other dimensions for no good end at all.

After a year or so of Marvel-derived movies seeming relatively safe, 2014 is going to see them explode in all sorts of directions. I'm hoping *Big Hero 6* is a smash, not least for the doors it might open and barriers it might topple in Disney animation.

DECEMBER: *PADDINGTON*

And we'll end the list with another family film, and also another adaptation. Paul King, director of *The Mighty Boosh* and *Bunny and the Bull*, has been a lifelong fan of Michael Bond's Paddington Bear, and seems like just the perfect choice to finally bring the rather furry and very cuddly Marmalade Sandwich aficionado to the big screen.

Colin Firth is providing the voice of Paddington, Nicole Kidman has been cast as the evil taxidermist (which makes me feel kind of awkward about wanting a stuffed Paddington, I have to admit) and Jim Broadbent and Sally Hawkins will be playing Paddington's surrogate parents. So, like a Harry Potter movie, say, there's going to be a lot of British character actors mingling with the odd movie star here.

But unlike *Harry Potter* there's warm, handmade feel to everything Paddington and everything Paul King too.

I think we could be in for a tremendously charming, eccentric little picture here, and something that — like *Big Hero 6*, *The Lego Movie*, and *The Boxtrolls* — work for audiences of all ages.

And after that... it's Christmas, the time to trade Blu-ray copies of at least eight of the above. Then it's 2015, The Big One, and the density of giant, blockbuster, or franchise releases becomes just so dense that there's going to be almost no breathing room. Maybe next year I'll have to sift the movies into a week-by-week list just to hint at even one half of the best.



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NEAL ADAMS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

by Jeff Spry



THE ART OF

NEAL ADAMS

NEAL ADAMS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

by Jeff Spry



In the rose-petaled realms of comic book royalty, there are few bigger than Neal Adams. No contest. Pow! Game Over.

His boldly beautiful pencil work for DC and Marvel during the glory years of the late '60s and early '70s resonates with the mark of a masterful modern eye and singular talent.

While Apollo astronauts strolled the lunar surface and Broadway Joe became a gridiron savior, Neal Adams quietly conjured a kaleidoscopic

menagerie of heroes, supervillains, and monsters.

I was lucky enough to spend time with Adams during the sell-out sensation of the 2nd annual Denver Comic Con in June and again this fall, speaking to him from his New York City home.

Sitting beside him, watching his steady hand line the contours of Captain America's cowl, one might hear how he slipped vampires by the Comics Code, feel his distrust toward Twitter, or learn a fast lesson on the philosophical science of autograph pricing. It's all ample grist for the ever-whirling wheel of Adams' mental mill.

The Eisner Award Hall of Famer has enjoyed an illustrious career, championing the creator rights of grateful generations of artists and drawing a revolving roster of costumed crusaders like Superman, Green Arrow, and Green Lantern, but most notably his inimitable style leading Gotham's favored son Batman into the jet age.

Being in Colorado and musing on Adams' brotherhood with Bruce Wayne, it felt proper to first ask his reaction to the Aurora mass-shooting at a *Dark Knight Rises* screening last year, where 12 people died a mere nine miles from where we sat chatting.

"I felt awful," he said, visibly moved. "I don't like to dwell on things like that, it's too pervasive. Obviously I'm for a lot of gun control. There's nothing in society that requires these types of semi-automatic weapons. One of the things you do as an artist once you've reached that silver cloud is to look down and tell people to watch out for things. We need to take the next TWO steps in logic with this issue and not find temporary solutions, which are only the disasters of



the future."

With the infinite chaos of cyberspace and monetized resurgence of superheroes, sci-fi, and gobs of geek culture in Hollywood, what inspires Adams today? In a word... Everything!

"I read and pay attention to shit. Look, we have the greatest creative community today to work off of. Ideas are all around us. One of the biggest problems with writers today is that they get stuck in comic books and don't study history."

Lording over a broad vendor booth flanked by brilliant banners emblazoned with Wolverine, Batman, and Green Lantern, Adams settles onto his stool and directs

passing fans to an enticing spread of digital prints ripe and ready for autographs.

"They're twenty each or get three for fifty," Adams barks. He sorts his pens and looks out onto the cavernous convention center floor, aisles already flooded with morning cosplay and commotion.

"I predicted this show would double in size and it did. The other cool thing is because of the nature of last year, all the artists have gathered back in Denver again. Flocks of them! The word got out and people responded."

I slip him my mint copy of *The Witching Hour* #14 and ask if he had fun drawing the crazy cover, depicting pink-haired hags riding broomsticks around a haunted house in space.

"Well, really we were just trying new ways to slip stuff by the Comics Code censors," he said. "Most of them were clueless."

No one understands the business end of the industry like Adams, except his wife, Marilyn, manning the limited-edition books and collector prints section of her husband's monumental work.

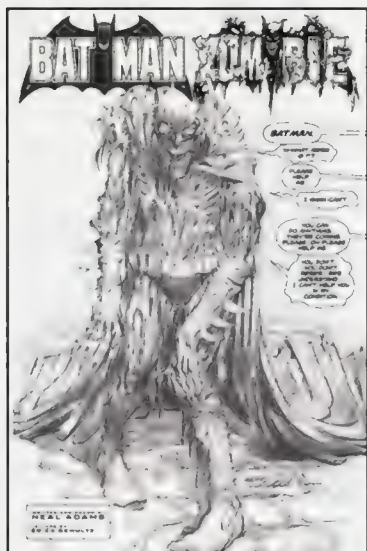
Barely into his 70s, he shows no sign of easing into retirement, still with the creative energy of a dozen mad dervishes. Clear eyes twinkling, he could erupt at any instant with story snippets



BATMAN

Noni Adams





Comics book. Especially today, it's more important than ever for young artists to have a good understanding of how the business and finance side work."

He seems to genuinely love the interaction with fans and receives each gushing compliment with reserved grace. When budding artists approach with an outstretched hand or comic to sign, Adams always remembers their name and offers words of encouragement.

"I'm a people person and I like talking to people. I relish it while I'm here, but I'd rather be at my desk working or with my family. And my two sons, Josh and Joel, are now in the comic world and here with me so you can imagine how great that is for me."

When a pixie pair of pig-tailed convention-goers bops up to his booth for Adams to sign their lanyard pass, he kindly tells them there's a \$10 fee and asks where their parents are. As dejected doe-eyes stare blankly back at him, this polished businessman, who can accurately guess the exact location of your pocket cash, wilts and kindly offers his signature to the bubbly twins for free.

Not one to mince words or reserve opinions, Adams is admirably enthusiastic for last year's trippy and controversial 13-issue, *Batman: Odyssey*, now combined in deluxe graphic novel form.

plucked from six prolific decades working in the comic book industry.

"I'll tell you. Somebody ought to put in a business section with every art manual or How To Draw

"You gotta read it," he insists with boyish glee. "I just finished it and it's a pretty adventurous book. Funny... people ask you to do something new then they say whoa, that's too new."

Odyssey takes Batman on an epic journey to the underworld, not of the criminal element, but beneath Earth's crust where the entire Neanderthal race has taken up housekeeping all these eons.

"I went back along Batman's trail and picked up scraps. When he started out he carried two .45 automatics at his side. When one of the DC editors decided he shouldn't have them anymore, they vanished. This story I did explains exactly why Batman doesn't carry guns. Because his parents were killed right in front of him with a gun! It's also essentially about Batman today, questioning his future as a vigilante in an era of assault rifles and international terrorism if all he does is capture criminals for them to escape and kill more people. He struggles





with that. He has to answer to himself. But he goes to a place you'd never expect him to go, to be with the Empty Spacers underground."

A loud cheer rises across the hall as William Shatner arrives. Adams notices and lifts his eyes from a small Batman sketch.

"Is that Shatner? Hey, we gotta keep him working," he kids. "He's an old guy now, you know."

With Christopher Nolan's grim Batman Trilogy complete, discussion naturally migrated to his thoughts on where the next cinematic chapter should take the Dark Knight. And what Bat-tale would Adams tell should the director's chair be slid his way?

"Man-Bat," he quickly fires back. "I'd do Man-Bat with

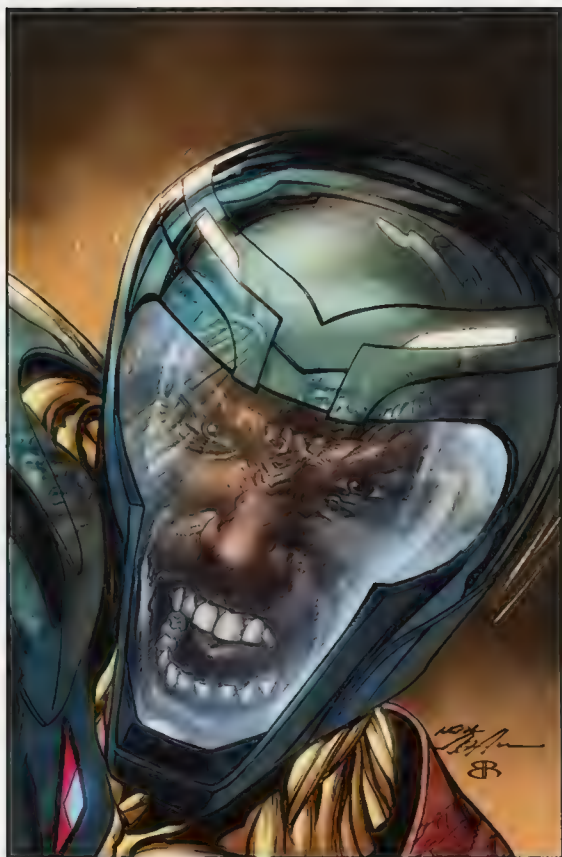
a really in-depth Ra's al Ghul."

Uncaged by Adams and Frank Robbins in 1970, Man-Bat is Dr. Kirk Langstrom, whose radical experiments on winged mammals leads to a serum that transforms him into a giant homicidal bat.

"I'd do something similar to *Batman: Odyssey*, or an ecologically-based evil plan orbiting around Man-Bat because he's

a morally weak character being used as a foil by Ra's al Ghul against Batman. That way you can expose and provide info on various forms of clean energy and hybrid fuels. I'd illustrate ways to harness solar power and hydrogen cells in an entertaining way, to show Batman isn't just a guy who chases clowns around, but has an obligation to society too."





Adams enjoyed the last Bat-saga starring Christian Bale, especially since it was born from some of his most memorable Batman work.

"The last three Batman movies went straight to my and Denny O'Neil's material for the screenplays and they were very successful. When I was in L.A. talking to David Goyer, the co-writer, he told me he didn't want me to think they were using *The Killing Joke* for the basis of *The Dark Knight*. It was "The Joker's Five-Way Revenge" story we did in *Batman* #251 from 1971. It's where Denny and I re-introduced The Joker."

His intriguing project with Christos Gage on *The First X-Men*, a five-issue limited series released in February 2013, had Adams burrowing further into the past with Wolverine recruiting mutants.

"I don't like the idea of randomly going forward without knowing the roots for the character," he said. "What I find troubling in comics today is that freedom without

control is bad. Good editorial control over the general flow is essential. Even though Batman has had many incarnations over the years, he still stays the same Batman. Even freedom has to be organized."

Not a huge fan of fantasy, Adams looks for the bare reality of the characters' lives and insists they have a history.

"With Wolverine, I wonder what keeps him coming back to the mansion. What's going on there? Here's one of the most intelligent characters in comics. I wonder if Beast isn't really his son. Now that's never been said before but I want to start a rumor."

He winks and takes a sip of coffee, his high-octane mind racing.

"It would not be a surprise to me. The hair's the same, they're built the same. Think about it."

As the convention wrapped up and lines grew thin, Adams gets a visit from his son Joel, who slaps a slip of paper on the counter. Adams peeks at the figure written on the back and smiles proudly.

"That's your best yet," he says, congratulating him on the weekend take at his artists' table. Joel strolls off and Adams shifts topics when someone mentions Fathers Day coming up. His face blooms.

"Hey, I got my birthday and Fathers Day on the same weekend. Life's great. I draw pictures for a living and people give me money," he joked. "Don't tell anybody but I'd do it for free."

Right now, Adams has a fistful of glowing irons in the creative fires.





He's busier than ever, with countless projects, commissions and appearances, even a featured historian spotlight in last fall's PBS special, *Superheroes: A Never-Ending Battle*.

The indefatigable Adams is also riding a renewed surge of popularity due to his stellar work in the rebooted *Batman: Black and White* mini-series, especially his grisly, 8-page morality tale, "Batman Zombie," in September's premiere issue, which he wrote and drew in his stunning, provocative pencil work.

"When I was asked to work on the first issue it occurred to me that I didn't want to just do a Batman story, you get bored with them," he said. "Heroes save and build and make things good. They don't go around, as in the new Superman movie, knocking down stuff and destroying buildings. I wanted real life and real people doing real things. Batman doesn't have a place in the community so these heroes are OK when kept in their own heightened element, but real human beings doing real things in their lives

and community are more important. The characters and their troubles in this story actually exist. I researched these people who are deeply affected by the economy and considered criminals but are simply struggling with mortgages and poverty. No Superman or Batman in a cape can help them and I thought I'd use the zombie theme to show Batman's helplessness in dire, real life situations."

Using raw, un-inked lines and gentle shading, nobody does a zombified Batman like Neal Adams and he's grateful for the rapt attention and praise this latest material is receiving.

He's also looking forward to next year's *Detective Comics* #27, the 75th anniversary edition celebrating the birth of Batman, with a massive commemorative issue to include art and words by such Caped Crusader luminaries as Scott Snyder, Frank Miller, Paul Dini, Francesco Francavilla, Sean Murphy, and many more.

"I'm doing sort of an introduction page about the various stylistic trends used over the years and his incarnations as Batman shown in a funhouse mirror. We will see all these reflections shattering before him. It's really a romp through Batman's life and times."

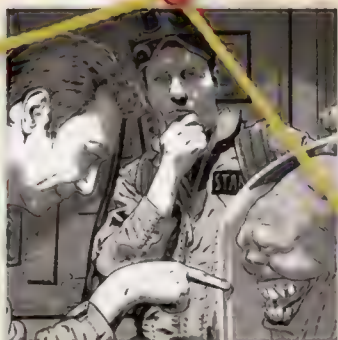


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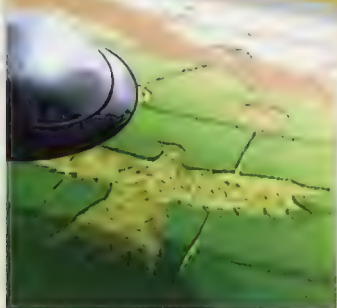


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GOING ROGUE

by Dan Wickline



GLORY
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RYAN
BROWN

GOING ROGUE

by Dan Wickline



In 1981, Gerry Finley-Day and Dave Gibbons created a new science fiction series called *Rogue Trooper*. It quickly became one of the premiere comic in the *2000AD* catalogue alongside *Judge Dredd*, *ABC Warriors*, and *Slaine*. In the three plus decades since, the character has appeared regularly in comics, video games, and recently Grant Morrison has said he is working on a screenplay. During this year's San Diego Comic Con, IDW Publishing announced they would be bringing out a new *Rogue Trooper* series written by *Godless World Trilogy* writer Brian Ruckley and artist Alberto Ponticelli.

HOW FAMILIAR WERE YOU WITH *ROGUE TROOPER* AND THE REST OF THE *2000AD* CATALOGUE?

BRIAN RUCKLEY: Very, up to a certain point. As a fresh young chap I read the

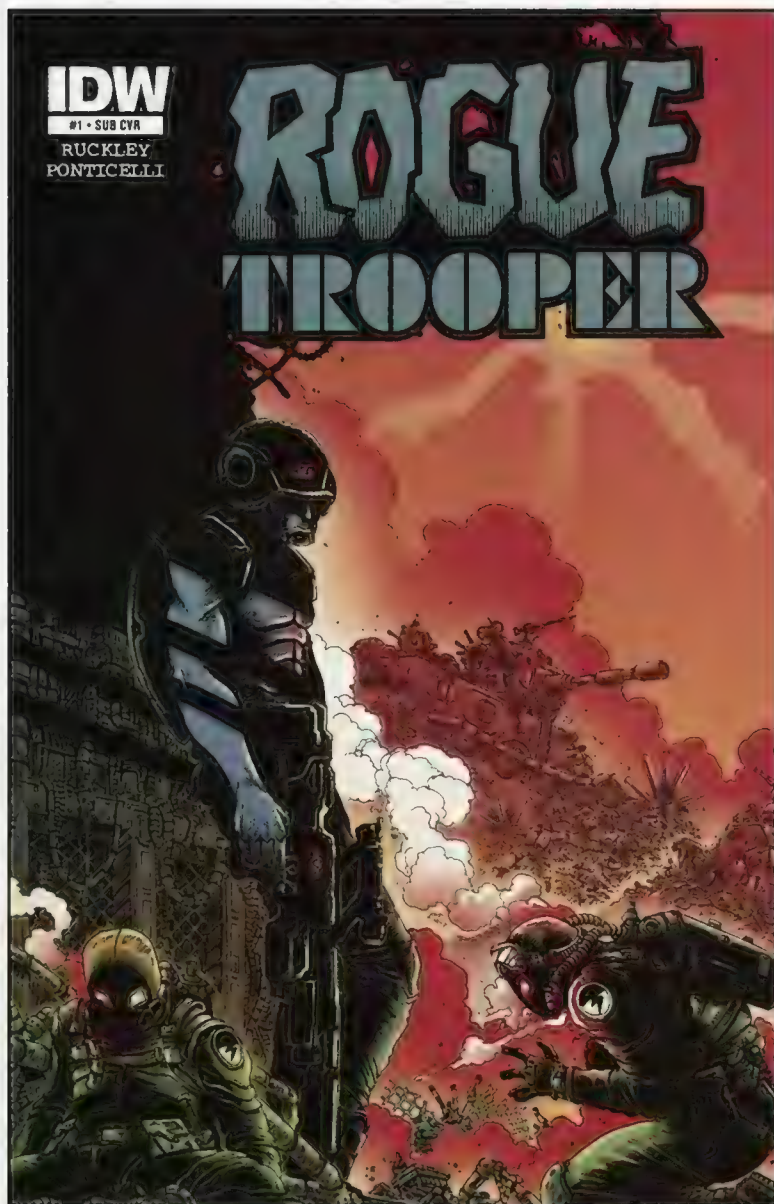
first – oh, I don't know exactly – probably close to 400 issues of *2000AD* as they came out, so I've read a whole lot of *Rogue Trooper* in my time. After that, to be honest, I fell pretty hard for US comics and they kind of seduced me away with their pretty colours and longer page counts. I still remember reading the very first *Rogue Trooper* strip, though, and just thinking it was all kinds of cool – the character, the setting, the talking hardware, all of it.

ALBERTO PONTICELLI: As an artist I've always loved the *2000AD* universe. I grew up with a lot of artists and writers from the publisher, and the rage and the punk spirit of their stories was something incredible to me. A savage way to do comics! And *Rogue Trooper* is one of my favorite characters. When I was younger I used to draw some *Rogue Trooper* pinups by myself. Now I draw the comicbook...

THE CHARACTER HAS BEEN APPEARING REGULARLY FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS. HOW DO YOU APPROACH WRITING A CHARACTER WITH SUCH A RICH HISTORY? HOW MUCH OF THAT HISTORY DO YOU KEEP AND HOW MUCH DO YOU JETTISON?

BR A rich history's a blessing in a lot of ways. It gives you a whole load of touchstones, ideas, references, context you can draw on. Not that I plan on doing a whole lot of major call-backs to past *Rogue Trooper* storylines – maybe a bit occasionally, but in general I want this series to be its own thing with





WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU MADE IN THE LOOK OF THE CHARACTER?

AP I think the original character is perfect as it is, but we tried to modify his equipment just to give him a slightly different look. The final result should look very similar, but if you take a look at the details many things will be very different.

THE CREATION AND MUCH OF THE ORIGINAL RUN OF *ROGUE TROOPER* WAS INFLUENCED BY REAL WARS INCLUDING WORLD WAR II, THE CIVIL WAR, ETC. HOW MUCH WILL THE WARS IN OUR OWN HISTORY PLAY INTO THE NEW SERIES AND WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO GO THAT DIRECTION?

BR Good question without a simple answer! I'll try, though: I'm probably drawing less direct influence from specific wars or battles in our real history

its own history. You keep what you like, is the bottom line; that and what you reckon are the core, defining elements of the character, context, and story. Fortunately, in the case of *Rogue*, I reckon the original creators nailed it. There's not a whole lot about early *Rogue Trooper* – which is what I'm mostly working from – that feels like excess baggage. It was a lean, mean creation back then at the start: clear and to the point.

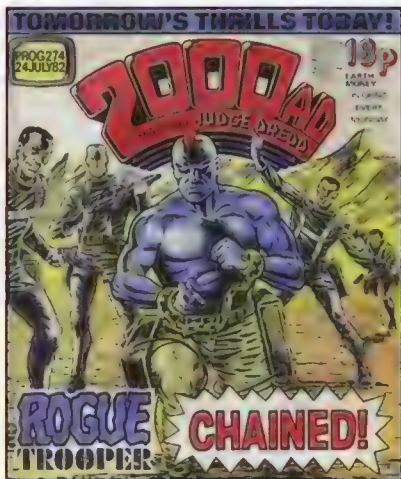
THE CHARACTER HAS A PRETTY SIMPLISTIC DESIGN CREATED BY DAVE GIBBONS. HOW CLOSE HAVE YOU STAYED TO THE ORIGINAL DESIGN?

than those early *Rogue* stories did, but I'm very definitely taking a whole lot of indirect influence. I might drop the odd specific nod to some real world history in, just for fun, but I'm more interested in touching base with more general contemporary attitudes to war. One simple example would be acknowledging the physical and mental impacts of war upon those who are caught up in it. That was in the original series, and it'll show up in mine, spun in particular ways that echo some of the things that get talked about nowadays. The whole vibe of *Rogue* fits kind of well with many current issues surrounding



THEME IN THE ORIGINAL SERIES, BUT HOW WE CONDUCT WAR HAS CHANGED DRASTICALLY IN THE LAST THREE DECADES. IS THAT SOMETHING YOU WILL BE ADDRESSING AND WHAT OTHER THEMES WILL YOU BE USING IN THE NEW SERIES?

BR Honestly, if I extrapolated from war-fighting now to how it might actually be fought by a civilization with the resources and technology needed for interstellar space flight and colonization, I'd end up with a series I don't really want to write: all artificial intelligences, malware, unmanned vehicles, robots, hardly a flesh and blood human in sight. The impact of the original Rogue was based on individual foot-soldiers fighting face to face on the galaxy's nastiest battlefield. I wanted to hold on to that, so I have. But ... you can't pretend that things haven't changed, so bit by bit I'll incorporate some fairly hi-tech weaponry, loosely based on 21st century trends



war: doubts about its wisdom, heightened appreciation of those who pay a high price in its course.

WAR IS A MAJOR

in combat. Exciting action is an integral part of *Rogue Trooper*, and there's no denying a certain amount of futuristic tech can add to the fun of that, but I'm still working hard to keep it focused on the people.

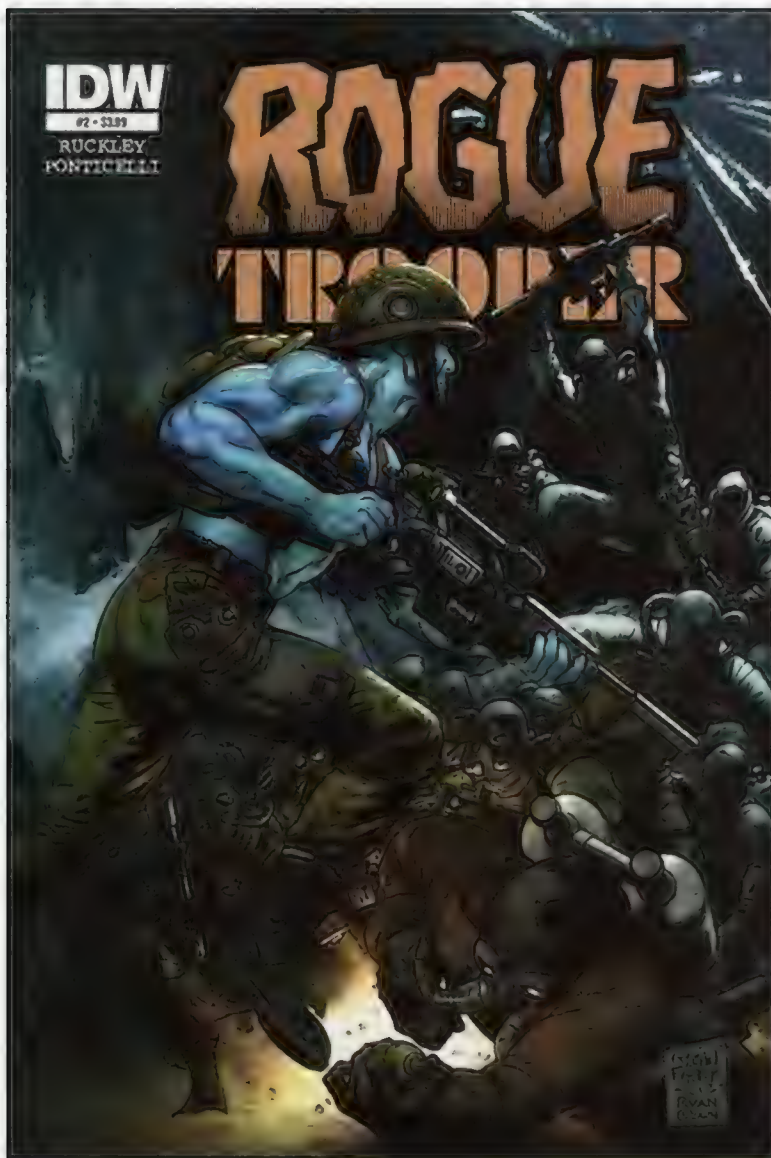
As for other themes - well, *Rogue Trooper* has a whole heap of potential themes cooked into the basic concept. Just look at what's there, if I want it: genetic engineering and all the identity questions that raises, a whole planet environmentally destroyed by WMD, betrayal, heroism, the grunts on the front line with the top brass safe in orbit, the whole outsider trope. There's plenty more I could list. Some of that stuff's bound to show up sooner or later, right?



WHEN DRAWING A SERIES THAT IS SURE TO HAVE A STRONG AMOUNT OF VIOLENCE, DO YOU PREFER TO BE IN-YOUR-FACE WITH THE BLOOD AND GORE ASSOCIATED WITH WAR OR DO YOU PREFER A MORE SUBTLE APPROACH? WHY?

AP That's an interesting question: of course it depends on the story I'm drawing. On *Unknown Soldier*, for example, the war I had to draw was so realistic, so I tried to not indulge in the splatter. I didn't want the panels to be too "aesthetic." I used a mix, trying to give a kind of creepy atmosphere.

Here everything is more over the top, so I will have good time drawing some exaggerated scenes, with a lot of splatter and stuff like that.



and storylines to longer form story-telling (monthly comics rather than short weekly strips), or they're to just bring the look, style, tone, and themes of the comic slightly up to date.

The basic set-up of character and setting and plot for *Rogue* is strong stuff, that's stood the test of time well and is accessible to all kinds of audiences. It's a lone wolf warrior – a hero – searching for answers and justice amidst a spectacularly unpleasant war, after all; that's pretty fundamental, universal story-telling stuff, with a wide potential appeal. It's timeless, in a way: the outsider, the unappreciated hero, the super-capable fighter righting wrongs, searching for vengeance in a brutal and hard-edged world. In fact, when you put it like that he's a Clint Eastwood character, and that's a type that's got a fair amount of appeal in the US, right?

UNLIKE HIS 2000AD COUNTERPART, *ROGUE TROOPER* IS SOMEWHAT UNKNOWN HERE IN THE UNITED STATES. WHAT CHANGES IF ANY HAVE YOU MADE FOR THE US MARKET AND WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE CHARACTER WILL APPEAL TO THEM?

BR I wouldn't say any changes we've made are specifically to appeal to an American audience; not directly, anyway. That might be a partial result, but the more immediate thinking behind changes we've made mostly falls under one of two headings: they're either to adapt the concept

***ROGUE TROOPER* HAS HAD A LONG LIST OF EXTREMELY TALENTED ARTISTS WORKING ON IT. HOW MUCH DO YOU LET THE PREVIOUS ARTISTS INFLUENCE YOUR WORK ON THE CHARACTER NOW? IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR ARTIST FROM THE RUN OF THE CHARACTER THAT YOU CONNECTED WITH BETTER OR USE THE MOST AS INFLUENCE?**

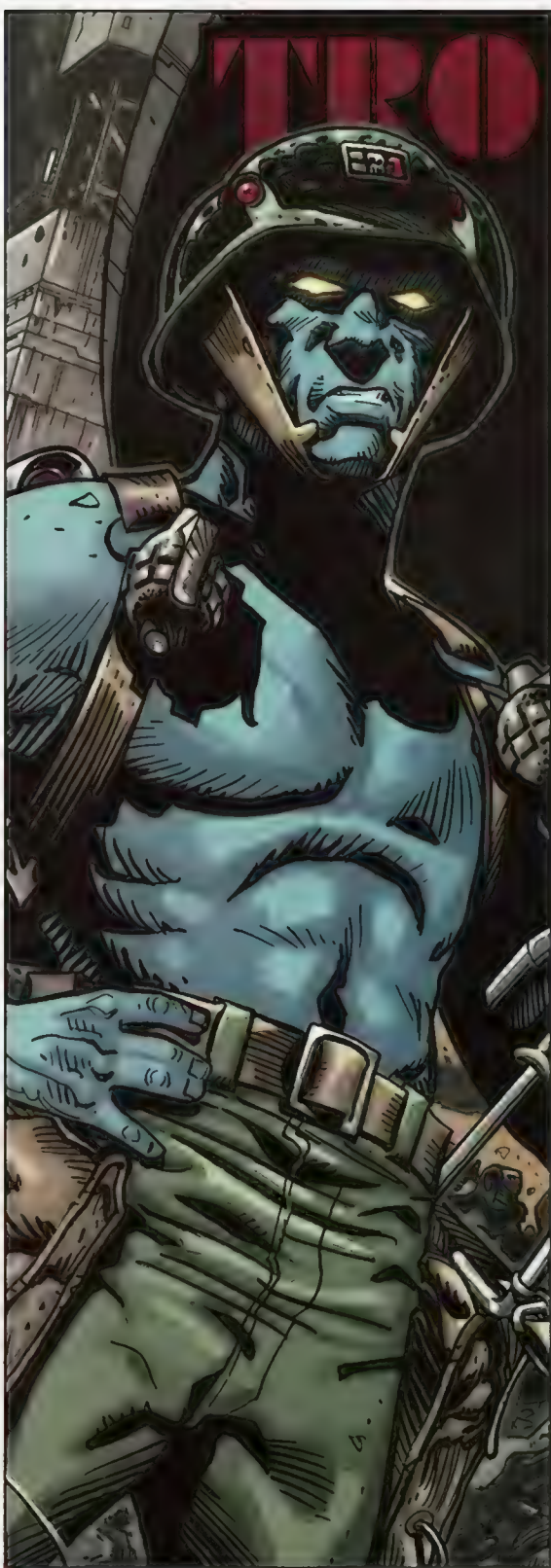
AP I love many of those artists, but I'm trying to not be influenced by them, as I'm scared I could be too similar to their style. So I am trying to not look at them and reinterpreting the character with

my own style. I'd love Rogue to be a little "dirty" (like war is) and so my style will go that direction. I will try to have a style that will be both muscular and gritty.

YOU ARE BEST KNOWN AS A NOVELIST AND FOR WRITING THE *GODLESS WORLD TRILOGY*. WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH TO WRITING *ROGUE TROOPER* AND HOW DOES THE COMIC FORMAT VARY WHAT YOU ARE DOING FROM WHEN YOU WRITE NOVELS?

BR The differences between writing novels and comics are too many to count. There are similarities, too, but they're mostly common to all forms of storytelling: thinking in terms of arcs, whether character or story, identifying and writing to key turning points or climaxes. All that big picture structure stuff you do to some extent whatever medium you're writing for. Thing about comics, of course, is the smaller scale structure's much denser, much more compressed. All those individual panels, the transitions between them, the page turns, the closing beat you have to hit each month. I like all that framework, to be honest: it provides a kind of scaffolding that's not always so obvious in prose, and forces you to think in a structured way.

And the writing process is radically different, of course. It's fast, collaborative, kind of like a conversation – makes a nice change from the solitary business of writing novels. In prose, every word I write is for the reader, the only way they'll get the story. Here, the words on the page are only a part of the package, and Alberto's doing a lot of the heavy-lifting in terms of mood and story-telling. Most of the words I write in a script are for him (and the colorist, the letterer), not the reader. To me that's the whole reason I like comics so much: it's a group of people combining to fling meaning and story at the reader in lots of different ways all at the same.



Ruckley and Ponticelli's run on *Rogue Trooper* hits comic book shelves this February from IDW Publishing.

THE CULT OF THE DVD COLLECTORS' EDITION

by **Brendon Connelly**



I know that there's an almost Pokemon-like passion out there for collecting every special edition by certain DVD and Blu-ray publishers. I've sat on the edge of conversations between smart, well-informed individuals who just can't get the topic to go beyond spine numbers or steelbook covers. Sometimes they've admitted to me that many of their purchases stay sealed, not because they're going for "mint in the box" but because they made the purchase for the packaging, not to even play the disc.

But these impulses aren't any that I've felt myself. I'm not sure why but I've never had that feeling that I have to "catch them all." But then, I was never the type who felt they had to keep the stacks lying low in Tetris and I'm not so great at keeping an orderly house. I'm rather Que Sera Sera about a lot of these things. And for me, what's so fantastic about The Criterion Collection, Arrow Video, The Scream Factory, or Masters of Cinema isn't the way they package their products. It's what their products actually are. Even the least impressive of their genuinely special "Special Edition" releases will offer much more depth than a snazzy cover illustration commission from a cult artist.

The Criterion Collection, the Big Daddy of these series started in 1984 with laser-discs of *Citizen Kane* and *King Kong*, as you might well expect they would. Not only were

the films presented in painstakingly created digital renditions that, despite perhaps seeming even more than thirty years out of date now that we're spoiled for super-HD, were state of the art for their time and undoubtedly a marked improvement on anything home entertainment videotape could offer.

Perhaps Criterion's most important decision, though, was to include supplements on their discs. Alongside *Kane*, for example, were some stills, the film's trailer, and early hybrid featurette-commentary items featuring many famous admirers of Welles' work, from Robert Carringer to Joe Dante. It was an amazing leap of faith for the company, investing time and resources into producing something untested, esoteric, sometimes a little academic and, very possibly, all too easy to ignore.

And while we're told that today, the majority of people will purchase a movie yet never, ever look at the supplements, there is definitely a culture out there of those who are quite hungry for the best special features. I know, because I'm one of them. And we are the cult that The Criterion Collection cultivated.

We also have Criterion to thank for standardising the letterboxing of films. Back when TV sets were 4:3 lumps, most every modern movie was being sawed off at the edges, steamrolled by the so-called Pan and Scan process to generate a hacked-up approximation "modified from its original version." The first letterboxed disc wasn't one of their own - it was MGM's *Manhattan*, notably also available on a letterbox VHS - but Criterion's attention to honouring the director's intentions, and declaring this mission proudly, even getting popular "auteurs" to put their signatures onto "approved" editions in a very public way whenever possible, played a very large part in popularising the "widescreen edition" amongst videophiles.

Once the uptake of letterboxed movies

was high enough, the advent of widescreen TV was all but inevitable, and that snowball then kept rolling until, relatively recently, I realised that I could pick up a copy of a film with a good amount of trust that it would represent the full work in its original aspect ratio. I remember the days of hunting for that one last non-4:3 copy of the *Back to the Future* box set, and I'm glad those times are behind us.

The AV purist can hold most of these titles up to some very exacting standards too. Criterion has regularly remastered and reissued titles already in their catalogue, sometimes in the same medium. A great example is Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, which was a benchmark release for Criterion - twice, and the second time, they offered the option of buying just the newly-anamorphic movie disc and not the full box set, saving us from having to pay for the same supplements all over again.

The Masters of Cinema line could well be considered the UK's answer to Criterion. They've released many of the same titles, and work to the same booklet-spine-number-desirable cover-slew of supplements strategy. Both publishers now offer films in dual DVD and Blu-ray editions too, very often mastered to the current limitations of what those mediums can offer. Masters and Criterion have proven to be near infallible when it comes to the visual and auditory mastering of their films.

I wish the same could be said of Arrow Video, another UK company making waves with impressively mounted releases, and The Shout Factor or their horror imprint, The Scream Factory, who are giving a lot of cultier, more genre-dependent fare the respect that Criterion heap on world cinema and the canon of classics.

While both Arrow and Shout seem to be making great efforts to offer the best picture and sound, and sometimes they absolutely nail it, there have been instances

on both sides where - presumably because the resources, time or money weren't available - the results have landed at "impressive" and not "definitive." At press time, however, neither has disappointed recently so perhaps these issues are just out there lurking in their catalogue titles. And I'm splitting hairs, for the most part. To say these publishers manage "more than good enough" on pretty much everything they put out is a considerable understatement.

At the moment, the big Hollywood studios seem to be plotting the demise of physical media, handicapping some of the bigger releases by stripping the special features across retailer-exclusive discs and even into the downloadable options. Try to get all of the supplements produced for *Star Trek Into Darkness* - and many of them are at least worth your time one time through - and you'll have to buy four separate copies of the film. The commentary, which is the best extra available for this title, is download only - and not even the "Digital Copy" download that comes bundled but one you'll have to buy specifically. *Man of Steel* was treated in a similar way in the UK though, thankfully, the US did get a pretty-much definitive set, if you were happy to shell out a premium.

So supplements aren't cheap, and it feels like fans of commentaries and behind the scenes documentaries are paying somewhat over the odds, but at least the option is there. For now. I'm sure Criterion will make it to their 30th anniversary in 2014, but it's not clear how much longer this business model will stay in profit. If tweaking the collectors' appetite with a nice shiny steelbook, a Mondo poster, or something as simple as a number on the spine keeps the wheels turning, then I'm all for it, even while I'll certainly be ignoring all of that as I pluck the platter from the package, slip it in the player, and navigate down, looking for that Special Features option.

LOVE AND ROCKETS

30 YEARS OF LOS BROS HERNANDEZ

by Gavin Lees

THE HERNANDEZ BROTHERS

love and rockets



LOVE AND ROCKETS— 30 YEARS OF LOS BROS HERNANDEZ

by Gavin Lees

To call Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez the “godfathers” or “elder statesmen” of alternative comics (as many have done) is something of a valedictory pronouncement, glossing over the fact that, after 30 years of producing comics, the brothers are still at the top of their game. Their signature work, *Love and Rockets* — which has just celebrated its 30th anniversary — is one of the most influential and groundbreaking titles to have graced the spinner racks. Yet, for modern readers, it can often seem like a daunting prospect to dive into its complex storylines. What follows can be considered a primer to the Hernandez Brothers themselves and the unique worlds they have crafted.

OXNARD

The brothers grew up as part of a large Mexican family in Oxnard, California — a suburb of Los Angeles. After their father died, while the children were still young, it fell to their mother to raise the six Hernandez siblings. As a way of entertaining the children, she would give them comic books to read, which inspired them to begin creating their own comics, purely for amusement. The eldest brother, Mario, was instrumental in getting his brothers to take the medium more seriously and introduced the young Gilbert and Jaime to the underground titles of the 60s — a far cry from the superhero and Archie comics they had grown up with. For them, though, the subject matter was unimportant, and the power of the sequential medium was what held their fascination.

As the brothers grew-up, comics became a side-line to their involvement with the burgeoning SoCal punk scene — all the

five Hernandez brothers played in a band at least once — but the two interests began to converge in a natural and organic way. As DIY culture became more prominent in punk music, the brothers quickly realized that they could apply that same attitude and aesthetic to comics. The punk shows they attended — and performed at — had intimacy, energy, and an edge that larger concerts lacked. Seeing that there could be that kind of reaction to even the scuzziest, roughest bands gave the brothers the confidence to branch out and begin to self-publish their comics.

Thus was born *Love and Rockets*. The title was coined almost by accident as Gilbert reached for words that would express the right combination of emotion and technology that fueled the early stories. As much of a manifesto was the cover to that first issue in 1982, showing a police line-up of five women, all Amazonian in stature, with the usual signifiers of superheroics or Heavy Metal exoticism, except for one. Right in the middle is a young, pale woman, in her bath robe and hair-curlers, turning away from the gaze of the reader. We may think that she is the odd-one out, but as we would come to find out, the Hernandez world is more supple and forgiving than other comics. That attitude caught the attention of Fantagraphics and with issue two, the brothers started a relationship with the publisher that continues to this day.

That first issue, too, would establish the format for the next thirty years, of the brothers working separately on their own stories in their own space (sometimes with the occasional involvement of elder brother Mario). Even though the stories were completely discrete, they managed to complement one another incredibly well. It was a very sibling-like arrangement — each owning and delineating their own space — and one that has ensured the longevity of their working relationship.

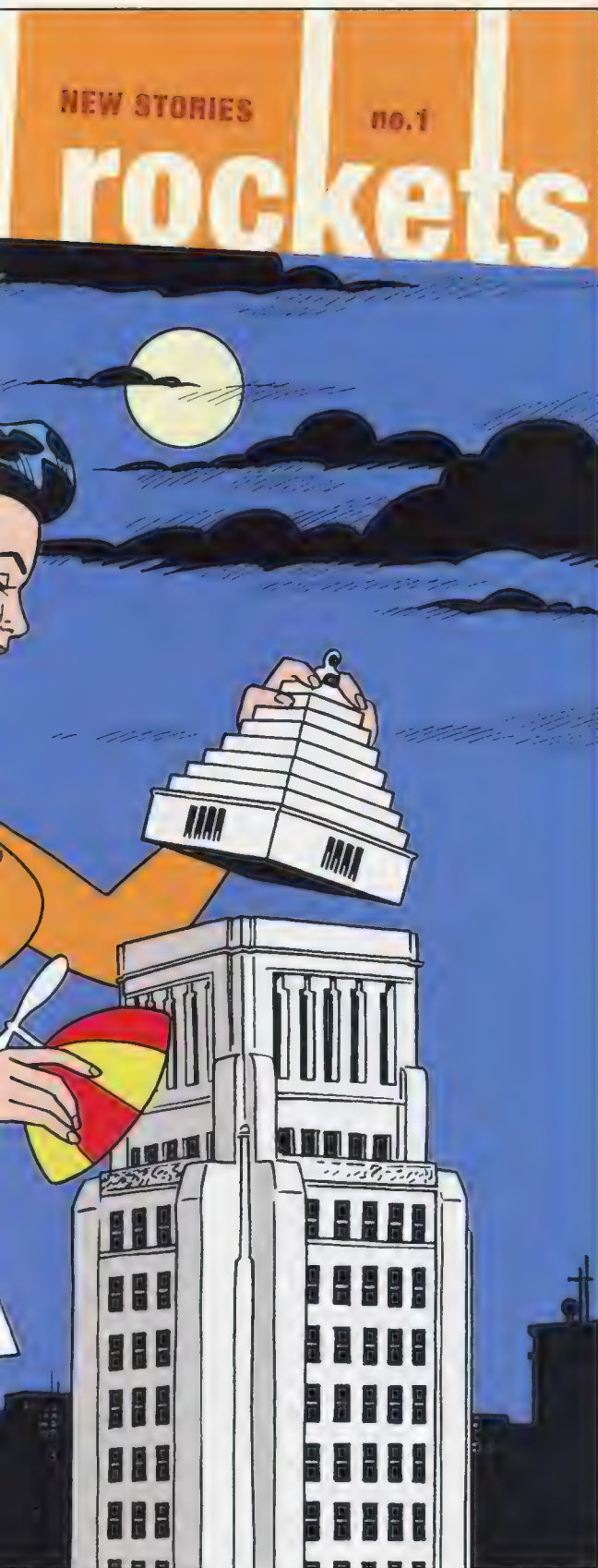
HOPPERS

Jaime's stories revolve around the small town of Huerta (or "Hoppers" as the locals call it, due to the presence of so many low-rider cars) and his character Maggie Chascarillo, a young Chicano girl. Even in his early, unpublished comics, Maggie has always been there in Jaime's work. She was someone who could do whatever he wanted her to — either mundane or fantastical — a characteristic that still remains. In the early "Mechanics" stories, Maggie was a rocket mechanic, repairing space-ships and dealing with marauding dinosaurs, while juggling the romance of dreamy mechanic Rand Race and back-home, on-again-off-again girlfriend, Hopey. Gradually, though, the science fiction elements were dropped and the stories became more about Maggie's home life, and the punk scene of the '80s.

Having grown up on *Archie*, Jaime wanted his own Betty and Veronica, which became Maggie and Hopey — the former, a down-to-earth girl struggling to find her place in the world; the latter a firebrand punk, who embodied the world that surrounded Hernandez at the time. He built an entire world around these ladies and, as a result, *Love and Rockets* was dealing with different races, genders, and sexuality, trying to redress that lack that the brothers perceived in mainstream comics. Just like the punk scene was accepting of all-comers, so too did the Hernandez brothers' comics embrace the ignored, marginalized, and maligned.

What was also especially surprising was that, as a male creator, Jaime's way of writing women rang remarkably true. He had grown to be longingly observant of the girls at the clubs he frequented — their attitude, fashion, and body language — but also had a

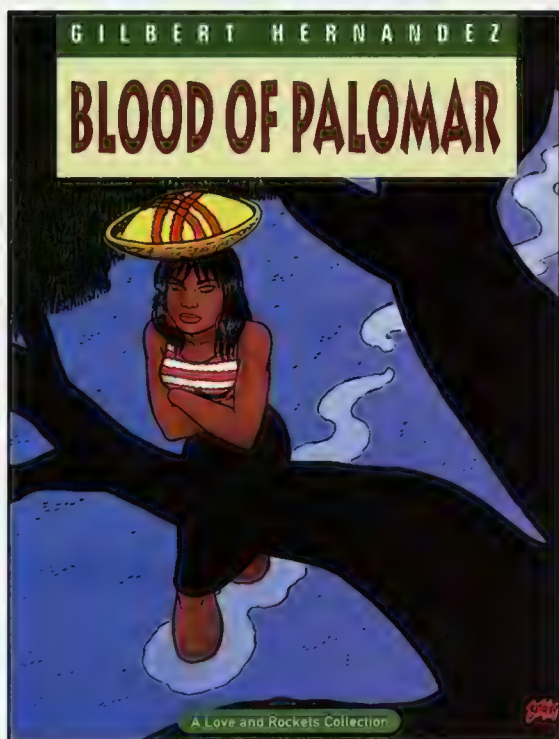




sense of equality, that women needed to be treated with respect. He often cites the fact that he was raised by his mother as the reason for his very feminine view of the world, and his innate insight into women. Even in the way he draws women, they are never merely allowed to be eye candy (although they certainly are pretty) they have strength and grace imbued in every line.

Indeed, we cannot help but admire Jaime's art and its swift refinement. In the early issues, he employed a heavily-rendered style, full of cross-hatching that was very much of its time, and in-keeping with the outlandish science-fiction themes. Very quickly, though, his art became more pared-down and simplified, owing much in its aesthetic to Dan DeCarlo and Hank Ketcham with stark black and whites. It's an almost effortless look — practically hand-writing — that gives a fragile dignity to the often downtrodden lives of his characters.

Those first 50 issues become a soap opera — in the best sense of the term — as we see these women's fictional lives played out before us, finding ourselves becoming emotionally invested in the tribulations of Maggie's love-life, the empty hopelessness of Hopey's music career, and the drama of the various other characters who we come to know like family: Terry Downe, Izzy Ruebens, Penny Century, and Ray Dominguez; all against the background of 1980s Southern Californian culture. This was a naturalistic form of storytelling never before witnessed in comics, and Jaime really started to shake things up with the story "The Death of Speedy." Right from the title, we know how this will end, but rather than turn the death of Izzy's brother and Maggie's love interest into mawkish melodrama, the event is



rather underplayed and we are left all the more devastated for it.

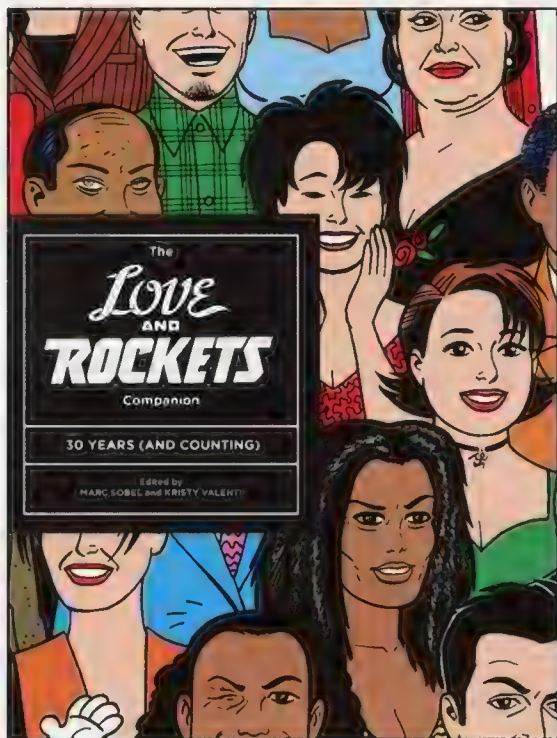
PALOMAR

For Gilbert's part of the comic, he too focused his efforts on a fictional town: Palomar. Although it was based on Mexico — that was the only other country he knew well, since that was where his parents came from — the location is never specified and always referred to as "outside the US border." These tales were much less autobiographical than Jaime's and delved into more literary territory. They took an unlikely inspiration from monster movies, which were another of Gilbert's great loves as he was growing up. Rather than go for scares, however, he would take the monster out of the equation and search for the human heart in the story.

As a result, the Palomar tales have a universality that transcends their locale, and even their medium. At the center of them is Luba, the wild, promiscuous, hammer-wielding mayor of the town. She had appeared earlier in "BEM" — a sci-fi romp that opened the very first issue of *Love and*

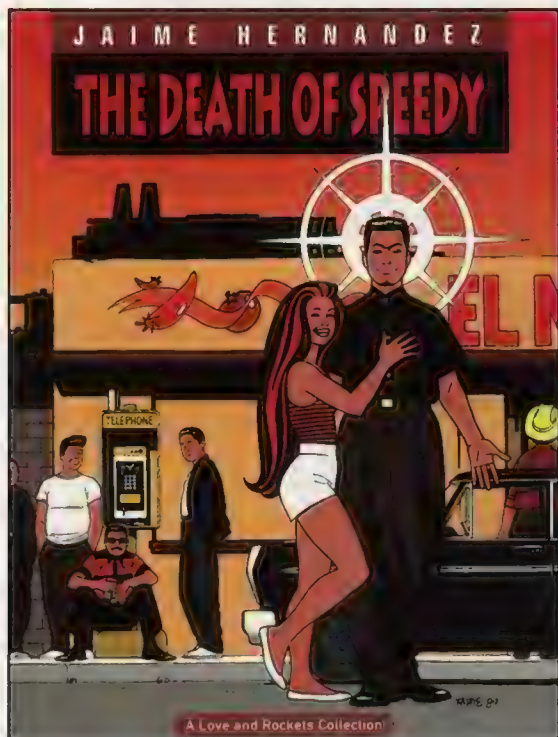
Rockets — as a side character, but Gilbert found her such a versatile and fun character, that he brought her into a more serious role at the heart of the Palomar world. As she developed as a character, her attitude and her enormously busty appearance came to typify his approach to both characters and his audience. Upon looking at Luba, we may expect a certain type of character — a ditsy, gratuitous, and empty cipher of a woman — we in fact get the exact opposite. Rather than being a sexist approach to women, it was actually a challenge to the reader.

The physical excesses of Gilbert's characters are mitigated somewhat by his art. Much less technical than his brother, his drawings are hewn from thick, inky brushstrokes — a style that recalls South American folk art — and a looser, more freeform approach to figures. Yet, the heightened emotion of his characters' faces never pushes them into the realm of Tex Avery histrionics; there is still subtlety and nuance that is often missed on first glance. In a way, that's characteristic of his entire approach to storytelling, and what may seem



crude or exploitative on the surface is, in fact, rich with depth.

The tales of Palomar owe much to the magical realist tradition of Latin America. The town exists in in our world, but some of the rules have been slightly bent to the point of being too odd to believe. In Palomar, brujas (witches) are very real threats, who wander into town on their duck feet, drumming on babies' skulls; ghosts congregate around an old tree; and the residents subsist on a diet of slugs. The highlight of these stories, and the beginnings of Gilbert's move towards more mind-bending storytelling, is the book-length "Human Diastrophism." A serial killer has come to Palomar and casts a violent shadow over the town. A group of menacing chimpanzees hover round the edges of the story, chittering in seeming mockery of the townsfolk and giving a physical manifestation of unseen-killer's actions. In one particularly gruesome scene, a group of men — driven to breaking point by fear — assault a group of the chimps on a garbage dump, spilling brains and blood in swathes of black ink. Only after the climax



of this episode do we see a severed human head falling out of a box on the dump. But more than just violence and tension, the story opens up an exploration of ideas as Humberto discovers art and the avant-garde that leads him to question the very nature of truth, just as Tonantzin is pushed by her exploration of her cultural past to self-immolate during a protest in New York. The chilling epilogue to her misguided, yet heroic death is snowfall of ashes over Palomar that underscores the heights of magical beauty that this series can reach.

AMERICA

In 1996, by the end of the first 50 issues of *Love and Rockets*, the brothers had become burned-out by the continuity of their stories, and so stopped. After being separated for over a year, Maggie and Hopey were reunited and rode off into the sunset, while Gilbert brought Palomar full-circle by revisiting the burden of Sheriff Chelo that opened the first issue. The pair went their separate ways and worked on separate comics — often still with the same characters

as before, as was the case with Jaime's *Penny Century* and Gilbert's *New Love* series. However, the fans still clamored for more *Love and Rockets*, as the title had become a brand-name, as far as is possible in the world of alternative comics.

When they brought back the title for a second volume in 2001, this was clearly a revitalized and reinvigorated pair of creators. Gilbert left Palomar behind, having told all the stories he wanted to, and shifted focus to the USA, where Luba and her family had moved. It meant leaving behind characters like Chelo and Heraclio, but at the same time he found a new surrogate character in Rosalba "Fritz" Martinez — Luba's long-lost sister. Similarly proportioned to Luba, Fritz is also possessed of a genius-level IQ and talks in a lisping baby-voice; formerly a psychologist, she subsequently worked as a B-movie starlet in a slew of cheap trash movies. Like Maggie with Jaime, she had been a character that Gilbert created long before *Love and Rockets*, but never had any place in his stories. Amusingly, it wasn't until he used her in *Birdland* (the Wilhelm Reich-influenced porn comic he produced for Eros) that he realized her potential and his affection for her as a character.

As an actor, Fritz is a cipher for others, and subsequently always searching for identity. In a way, her story was the essence of *Love and Rockets*, as it mirrored the solidification of Latino identity in America. She also foregrounded the intergenerational nature of the comics, as the characters age almost in real-time. The same is true for Jaime's stories, and his second round of stories featured an older, heavier, but not always wiser Maggie — approaching 40 and still struggling with her place





in the world.

The readers had aged, too, and fans who had been reading and meeting with the creators in the '80s, were now married and bringing their children to signings; some of whom have gone on to become fans themselves. *Love and Rockets* is a relationship with the audience, one that capitalizes on that shared history to create ever-more rewarding storylines. The passage of time has given the characters a distinct and lived-in past and, as with many people who are edging into middle age, they frequently ruminate on their past or revisit previous relationships with new perspectives.

This idea was the keystone to the most recent volume of *Love and Rockets*, "New Stories." In its fourth issue, Jaime concludes his five-part serial, "The Love Bunglers" with Maggie and Ray finally finding love with one another. At its climax, their entire history together — practically from birth — is laid out in a stunning double-page spread, with the two characters staring at each other across the panels, the page, and the ages. Long-time readers will be able to recall each of these moments, almost like memories from their own life, and the cumulative effect of thirty years and 75 issues is felt in one glorious, emotional sucker-punch.

Similarly, in Gilbert's universe, the generational focus has shifted once more onto Dora "Killer" Rivera, Luba's granddaughter. As an aspiring actress, she finds herself thrown into a similar crisis of identity as her aunt Fritz, starring in sleazy exploitation films, and also remakes of some of Fritz's roles. The layers of probing examination of character that go into these stories-within-stories is astounding, but again, an effect that could only have been

achieved after such a long time spent developing this world. In the most recent volumes of "New Stories," Killer has returned to Palomar to make a movie about the life of Luba. Through her, we re-discover Palomar for the first time; its stories become as legend and imbued with near-magical significance: Luba's hammer, Pintor's haunted tree, the hole Luba fell into in "Duck Feet," the ruins of the bath house. To the residents, though — 17 years since we last saw them — these events were nothing special; just life.

In many ways, that's an apt metaphor for the Hernandez brothers. As *Love and Rockets* embraced minorities within its pages — with black, Hispanics, lesbian, and gay characters—many saw this as revolutionary and a groundbreaking force for equality in pop culture. To the brothers, though, it was nothing special; just life.

HOME

The problem many new readers have with *Love and Rockets* is where to begin. With such a long history to the series, with parallel plot lines and often self-referencing storylines, it can be daunting and sometimes off-putting to feel that one has to slog through the earlier, stranger material to get to the quality material once the brothers hit their stride. But, like many epics, the answer is to start in the middle.

Fantagraphics have re-collected the material in digest volumes that cover Jaime and Gilbert's work separately, so they can be read as two discrete graphic novel series. Starting with the second volume of each (*The Girl from H.O.P.P.E.R.S.* for Jaime, *Human Diastrophism* for Gilbert,) the new reader can gain insight into the worlds of both brothers, just as their talents





begin to crystallize. Maggie is far from the world of space-age mechanics and settled into the naturalistic drama of Southern California with the punk soundtrack blaring in the background; while in Palomar, the noir drama of Gilbert's later work evolves in an epic self-contained story. Many of the peaks of the first 50 issues can be found here.

From that point, it becomes easier to explore the early days of *Love and Rockets*, and frequently these early stories benefit from that perspective. Often we will hear events mentioned, but never find out the full story until much later, so revisiting the stories from a privileged point-of-view makes it easier to solidify the characters in our minds and feel more innately connected to them. From there, we can not only go forwards, but sideways. While the main *Love and Rockets* stories propel forward — through volume two (collected in the giant *Locas II* and *Luba* hardcovers,) and *New Stories* — there are also many side-projects that tie into the main storylines, such as the adaptations of Fritz's many movies (*Chance in Hell*, *The Troublemakers*, *Love From the Shadows* and, obliquely, *Speak of the Devil*), the all-ages *The Adventures of Venus*, and *Amor Y Cohetes* — a collection of the non Hoppers and Palomar work, including many contributions from third brother Mario.

It may seem like a daunting amount of reading, but like the best novels and television serials, *Love and Rockets* demands attention and is not for the casual reader. Unlike many ongoing narratives, though, the Hernandez Brothers are always building on their past achievements, rewarding long-time readers with every new story, and lovingly crafting comics that love you back.

C-DAY IS COMING



CROSSED 50 ARTIST CHRISTIAN ZANIER

by James Kuhoric

C-Day is coming. The annual pilgrimage of Crossed fans to their local comic shop in order to partake in a celebration of all things vile and gut-wrenching. Each year the event has gotten bigger and bigger as retailers put together parties that include cosplay contests, filmed store skits, and give away Crossed related merchandise. The event is built around the annual return of Garth Ennis to his ultra-violent creation, Crossed. When the first *Crossed* series premiered in the summer of 2008, no one could have predicted the reaction that fans would have to an unmerciful world where the worst things imaginable are inflicted upon the innocent. Countless reviewers have dubbed Crossed a book that “must be read if you can stomach it” and its unrelenting approach to presenting the worst aspects of humanity has been embraced by Ennis’s hardcore fan base.

This March 26th, C-Day will once again darken the doorsteps of comic shops and expose fans to the dark future that awaits with the Crossed infection. The party is centered on *Crossed: Badlands #50* which features Ennis’s new arc “The Thin Red Line.” This story is special not only because Ennis is the father of Crossed, but because for the first time ever, it promises some clues about the origin of the infection. Dubbed a “patient zero” story by Avatar Press, the

new arc takes readers to outbreak day and reveals certain clues about how it came about and why the virus seemed to begin almost simultaneously across the globe. Ennis’s fans are certainly ravenous for more information about the plague they revel in and this event promises to rival the popularity of the initial series.

Illustrating the arc is artist Christian Zanier, whose first Crossed work was seen on the fan favorite Christos Gage story “Quisling” in 2013 (starring in *Crossed: Badlands #29*). With his second story arc

being a pivotal piece of Crossed history, we asked Zanier what about this gore filled world makes it so compelling to illustrate. He credited his love of horror and end of the world films for his fascination with the bleak landscape of Crossed. “The human psyche and our inherent primal nature to be aggressive and self-serving is only for the most part stymied by our conscious, yet it creates a varied level of those primal conditions with every individual. When we are born, both those characteristics are

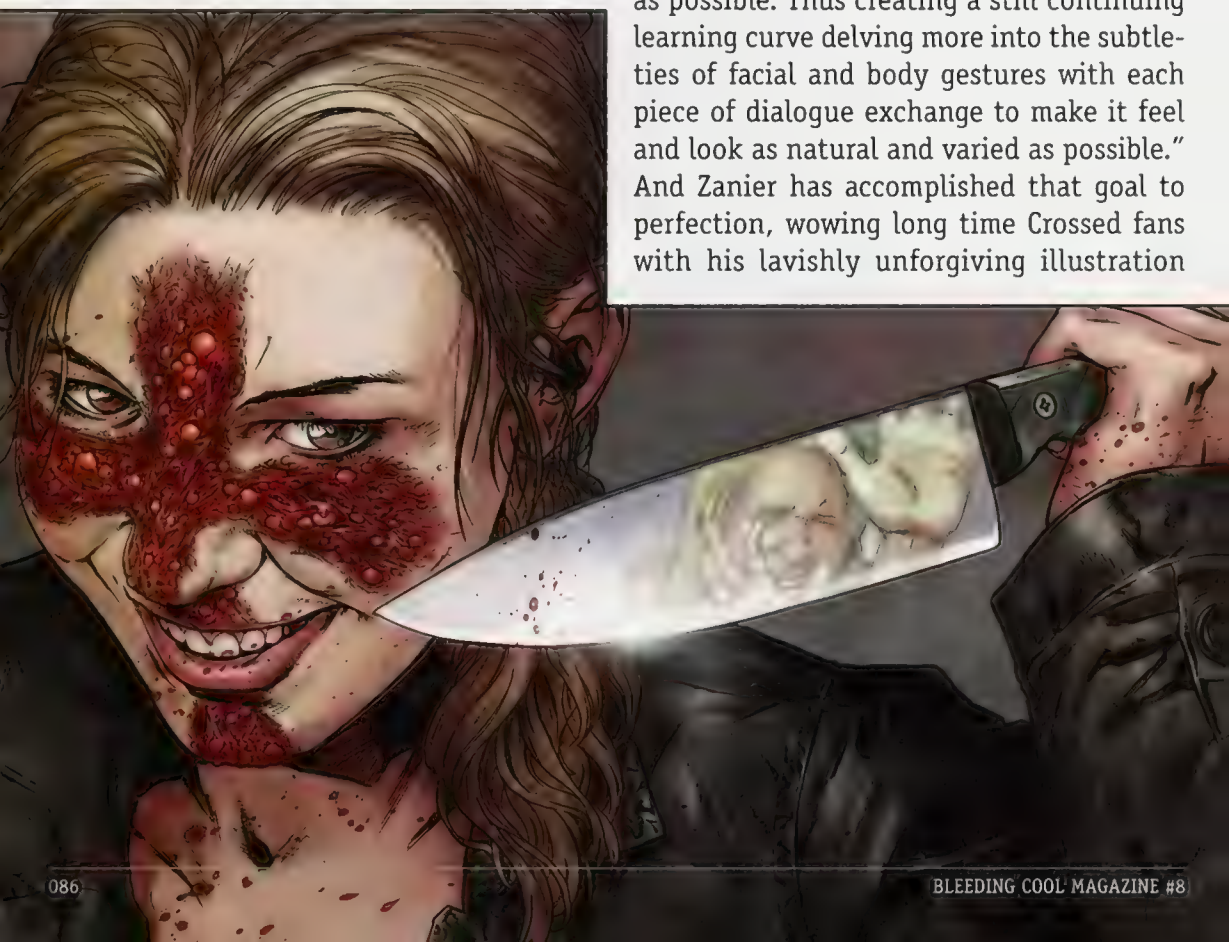


first very prevalent; hitting, pulling, craving constant attention, and crying to get whatever they want and need. As people grow they are taught that those behaviors need to be kept in check and learn societal rights from wrongs. But in some individuals who have physiological anomalies or negative social impacts which impede with this, monsters are created among men from petty criminals to psychopaths to dictators. There are atrocities done by these types of

individuals, some so abhorrent it is beyond comprehension. Now imagine if all inhibitions were removed and the psyche was completely cracked. Crossed is that scenario. So this is pretty much a formula catered for me." It's clear that Crossed hit a psychological chord with Zanier, who now has worked with two heavy weight writers in Gage and Ennis on the series.

Having an understanding and inherent interest in the concept is very important, but what about the challenges and rewards of knowing that you are illustrating the visions of industry mainstays? What motivates, rewards, and challenges an artist when having these sort of high pressure opportunities thrust upon them? Zanier's personal interests in the genre seems to drive him forward and help to bring out his best work in these high pressure situations. Regarding working with Ennis and Gage, he said "I have been fortunate not only to work with Avatar Press in a genre

that appeals to me on a personal fan basis as well as a professional one, but to start my career with such strong writers. Christos's fresh take was a great arc to begin with, and then getting to work with series creator and writing guru Garth Ennis is just the icing on the proverbial cake. That in itself was definitely a rewarding part of it. There is always a challenge in creating on paper what is in the creative mind of another. Being used to working on one's own script can intensify it by spoiling me as I illustrated it according to what I already visualized and desired. Getting it on paper is much easier. So being able to draw the images by excellent creative minds reminds one's self how such a challenge is an excellent way to hone skill as an artist no matter how seasoned you are. A good example in my case, even though I have been at this for quite a while, is working on such a heavy dialog script as 'The Thin Red Line.' It has put me through my paces in trying to keep it as visually fresh as possible. Thus creating a still continuing learning curve delving more into the subtleties of facial and body gestures with each piece of dialogue exchange to make it feel and look as natural and varied as possible." And Zanier has accomplished that goal to perfection, wowing long time Crossed fans with his lavishly unforgiving illustration

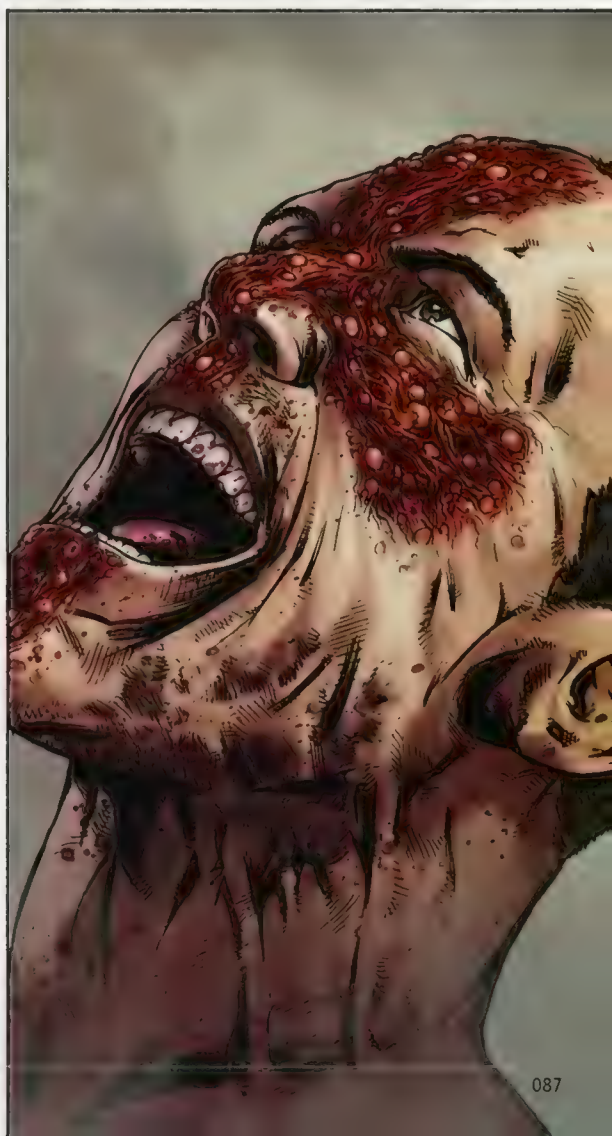


of the “Quisling” story arc. With such an incredible Crossed freshman piece of work under his belt, expectations for “The Thin Red Line” arc are in the stratosphere.

Ennis’ best comic book work over the years has been rooted in powerful characters, wholly original dialogue, and unflinching storytelling. These characteristics describe his work on Crossed to a T, where he has created unforgettable characters and scenes that are permanently burned into the collective conscious of the horror comic community. At its heart, he captures the human condition in all its animalistic glory, but that presents specific challenges for any artist attempting to breathe life into Ennis’s work. How do you prepare yourself to illustrate this kind of real human horror and drama? Zanier says that he approached this story challenge with a very real-world starting point. “My starting point for ‘The Thin Red Line’ was based primarily around the introduction of that era’s UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. I established the look of the surrounding characters around having to create Brown’s likeness on paper. So to blend in with that more naturally, I decided to base other characters on real life individuals and models. I looked at the visual characteristics of the main characters in ‘The Fatal Englishman’ (Ennis’s previous *Badlands* excursion) and fashioned each new one with features that I felt fit their overall looks. I wasn’t necessarily trying to get them to look exactly as the chosen models, but to just give them that realistic feel that the likeness of Gordon Brown produces. For the other characters I went with their descriptions and personalities in the script and based them on individuals I had a general overall fondness for. Even though it is more of a challenge to work with likenesses, it does create favorable side-effects. In terms of objects reference; Garth Ennis is a stickler for detail and fortunately so am I. With realism comes an authenticity and fine

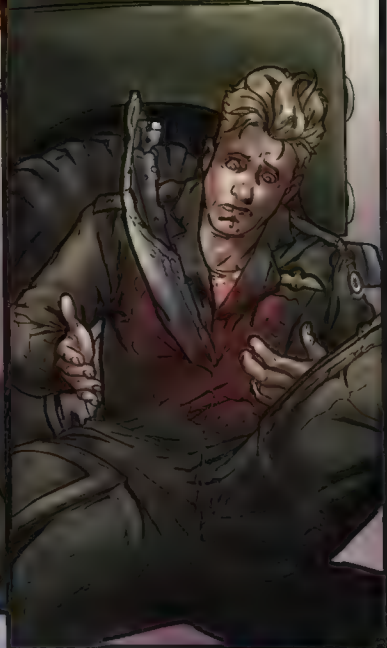
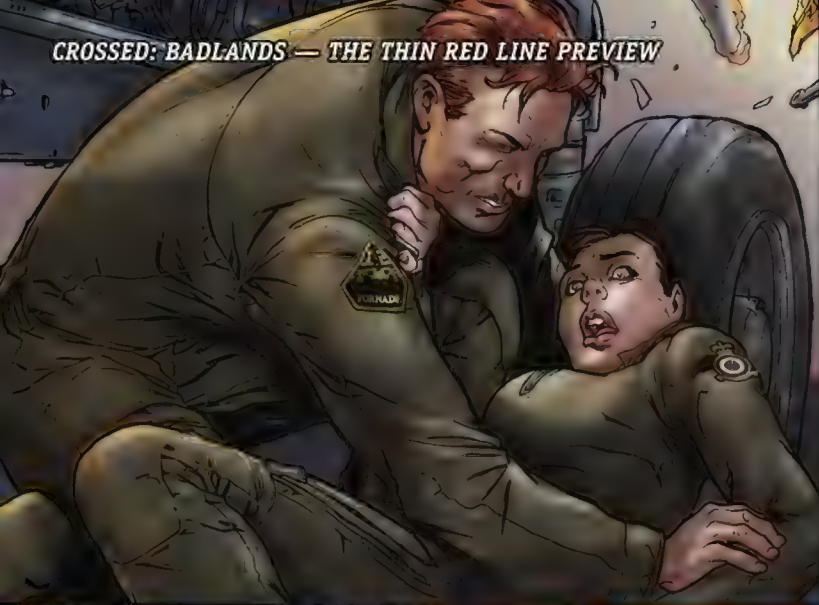
detail in environments, and with objects, mechanical and stationary. Garth specifies make and model for items and reproducing them on paper as close and finely detailed as possible is my forte, which makes for a cohesive pairing.” It is easy to see that Ennis has found a kindred soul in Zanier for his work on Crossed. The two seem to have a cohesive understanding of what is needed to flush out the violent tendencies of the maniacal Crossed universe in unnerving detail.

As a special feature to *Bleeding Cool Magazine* readers, we have obtained the following preview preview arc from the “Thin Red Line” story arc, which begins in issue #50. Come this C-Day, March 26th at local comic shops, there will be no help and no hope. There will be only the Crossed.











THE BITTER CUP: KIERON GILLEN'S ÜBER #1/2

by Keith Davidsen

We have never had a more persistent bogeyman throughout the history of comics than the Nazi soldier, and perhaps more so than in any other media, as evidenced by their appearance in titles as diverse as *Justice Society of America*, *Hellboy*, *Warrior Nun*, *Areal*, *I Am Legion*, *Hellsing*, *Battlefields*, and *Tom Strong*. That their four-color villainy endures throughout the decades can be attributed partly to their role in the invention of the superhero, as the vast majority of Golden Age characters were depicted in combat against Hitler's Third Reich, their Axis allies, and fifth columnist saboteurs operating on American soil.

When approached to write *Über*, an alternate history fiction involving nigh-unstoppable German superhumans, Kieron Gillen (whose comics work has included celebrated runs on such heavy-hitters as *Uncanny X-Men*, *Thor*, and *Journey into Mystery*) considered the nature of Nazism in comics. He concluded that, despite all that had come before, there was a direction that comics had never previously explored. In an interview published in the Enhanced

edition of *Über* #0, Gillen said:

"I was thinking, 'Hasn't WW2 superheroes been done enough?' and I sat down and realized, no, they hadn't and most of what I needed to say would be perfectly served by doing a story powered by that conceit. *Über* hasn't a single wink at the camera. It lacks any meta. In fact, I suspect its lack of meta will be taken as a statement of meta – that we're far too inwards-looking as a creator culture, and think too much about what our books say about the genre rather than what the genre can say about human existence."

With all the fury of a Panzer division, Gillen pushed forward and created a modern masterpiece of a darker time. *Über* brings us back to 1945, a year in which the Germans had been driven behind their borders and to



the very brink of despair (and rightfully so, from the comfortable perspective seventy-five years after our great moral victory). But in the alternate timeline of *Über*, the grotesque human experimentation of the age gave birth to the Nazi Wunderwaffen: first, the superhuman soldiers known as Panzermenschen, and in a second stage of development, three human "Battleships" with every bit the firepower and might as their namesake would suggest.

The three German Battleships

introduced in *Über* – Siegmund, Siegfried, and Sieglinde – are named for the tragic characters of Richard Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung*, the epic opera cycle which tells of the intertwined doom of gods and men. What an appropriate lift, then, as the affairs in this alternate history really do pit mortals against forces beyond their ability to grasp. The human characters of the series – Allied agent Freya Bergen, sinister Nazi visionary General Sankt, infamous Soviet sniper Maria, and real-world figures including Heinz Guderian and even the Führer himself – struggle to assert themselves in the new reality that the Battleships represent. Nazi figures squabble and vie for control over these living weapons, while the Allies try to recover lost ground and deal with the horrors they face.

But despite the carnage and evil, Kieron Gillen proves there's still room to feel sympathy for the devil...

Case in point: the revealing *Über* #1/2 issue, available through an offer in this very issue of *Bleeding Cool Magazine*, depicts the heart-wrenching tragedy that transformed devoted Hausfrau Klaudia Hoch into the towering Sieglinde. "It's really a confessional story to the reader, which is the structure I'm playing with for these little extra stories," says Gillen. The story, titled "Sieglinde: The Bitter Cup" is a vignette that not only adds, but gives meaning, to the larger *Über* mythos. "It's not a book about superhumanity," says Gillen. "It's about humanity and inhumanity."

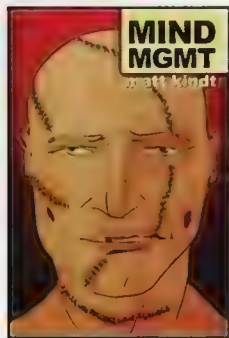
Don't forget to redeem the unique code on the inside back cover of this very issue for two very special offers! First, get a free copy of *Über: Sieglinde* #1/2 digital comic from Comixology! Second, you can use the very same code to purchase exclusive editions of *Über Special* #1, where this Sieglinde story will see print, that are only available from this special offer!



HOT COMICS

by Rich Johnston

Recent announcements of movie and TV options, pilots, and series based on comic books has given the back issue aftermarket a real shot in the arm. Here are a few affected books that could pay off for you in the future.



MIND MGMT #2

The hit series for Dark Horse by comics new superstar Matt Kindt and now optioned by Ridley Scott has seen a slabbed issue 1 hit \$56, but issue 2 hit \$67, reflecting its relative scarceness.



RACHEL RISING

ATV option did wonders for this Terry Moore comic, with a slabbed issue 1 hitting \$350 and a raw copy going for over \$100, and brought a lot of attention to the book. Which is handy, because it's a really good comic!

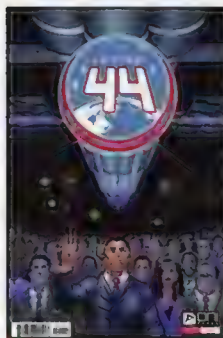


PREACHER #1

Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon's *Preacher*, published by DC/Vertigo, is being turned into an AMC series with Sony, to follow up *Breaking Bad*. As a result, issue 1 has sold slabbed for over \$600 and unslabbed for over \$300.

Even the flimsy floppy *Preacher Preview* that retailers received in their hundreds have also been sold for over \$600, slabbed. If you're looking for the next four figure comic, these are the ones – and in autumn

2013, comics you could still buy for around \$15 without difficulty.



LETTER 44 #1

A dollar comic when released earlier this year, this now sells for up to \$10 without difficulty, after news that it had been optioned by a TV production company leaked. The genius of the book's high concept could really work, and if this goes any further, this is a perfect bargain. *The Phantom Variant* cover sells for \$10-\$15 and the black and white preview version which sold at shows for \$10 now sells on eBay for \$55, and slabbed for up to \$100.



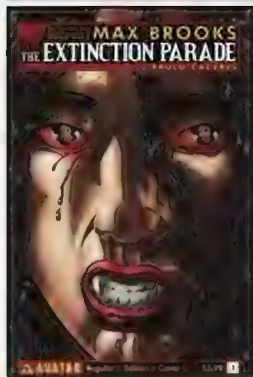
DAY MEN #1

A movie option being fast tracked has seen a high CGC slabbed version hit \$150, the Brian Stelfreeze 1:25 variant hitting \$40, the San Diego variant selling for \$30, the New York variant selling for \$20, and the standard cover selling for \$16. This definitely has the potential to grow, but it would also help if the comic came out in a regular schedule.



HOUSE OF MYSTERY HALLOWE'EN ANNUAL #1

iZombie being picked up by the CW has seen the characters first appearance sell online for \$40, while the first issue of *iZombie* sells from \$20 to \$25 without difficulty.



EXTINCTION PARADE #1

One of those books with plenty of market distorting limited variant covers, but at its heart is a standard \$3.99 comic, that with a high CGC rating goes for \$40, and unslabbed sells for \$5. If news on a TV series solidifies, this could take off like a rocket, especially given the author Max Brooks, creator of *World War Z* and son of Mel Brooks will always attract media attention.



PETER PANZERFAUST #1

A planned BBC web series saw this comic ripped from the shelves, with a high CGC copy selling for almost \$500, and raw copies for over \$200. It's hard to see how this can get any hotter, but when the actual web series airs, that's when things could get even crazier.



SWAMP THING #37

The first appearance of John Constantine, with a TV treatment being lined up for NBC, has seen this comic rocket with a high CGC slabbed version selling for over \$450, while an unslabbed VF version sells for \$70. The current revived Constantine comic, and the first to actually be called *Constantine* is still a \$3 book. And *Hellblazer #1* can be picked up from \$5-\$10. Maybe it's worth a little flutter?



GHOST PROJEKT #1

An Oni Press book going through the NBC system right now, it's a relative steal with CGC slabbed copies going for \$40 and raw copies going for \$30. Even books like *Sixth Gun* that didn't make it to TV shows or films benefited greatly from the attention.



AFTERLIFE WITH ARCHIE

Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa is the writer of the current *Afterlife With Archie* series. But he's also writing a new Archie Comics movie that combined a modern day Riverdale with tropes of horror stories. With *Glee*, *Carrie*, and fixing *Spider-Man Turn Off The Dark* under his belt, could *Afterlife With Archie*, already in demand, be the basis for the new film? Currently it's a \$5 book, it has the potential to go far higher.



SECRET SERVICE #1

This is not a hot book. Not yet. Mark Millar and Dave Gibbons' *Secret Society* had a relatively big print run, but is actually filming now. That has to reflect on the individual issues at some point, but at the time of writing in early December, it can be picked up for \$5 on eBay at the most, but I just saw issues 1 to 6 sell for \$1 the lot. So, keep your eyes open.

PRICE GUIDE

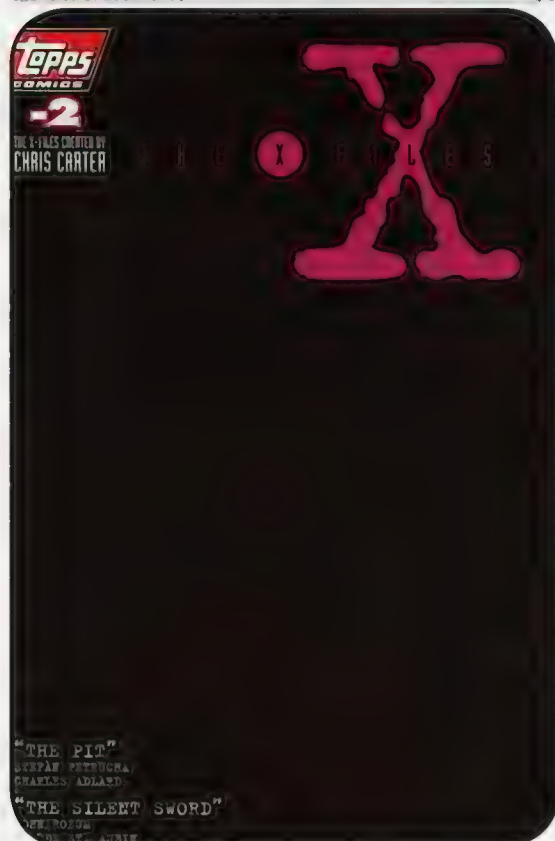
for Collectors and Sellers

Welcome to the Bleeding Cool Price Guide. This is a snippet of the kind of prices comics are selling for on the open market. Rich Johnston scoured the web and thousands of online auction listings to provide this snapshot of comic book sales. A price listed here is no guarantee you'll be able to sell yours for that price, but it might give you an idea of what someone, somewhere, is willing to pay! Retailers who would like to become part of an advisory board for the Price Guide feature should contact Jim Kuhoric via email: jimkuhoric@bleedingcool.com

THE X-FILES

TOPPS

Issue -2 red logo	\$6
Issue -2 gray logo	\$10
Issue -1 silver cover	\$6
Issue -1 white cover	\$10
Wizard 1/2 w/ certificate	\$12
0 Mulder Variant	\$8





0 Scully Variant	\$8	The X-Files Season One	
1 Special Ashcan Edition	\$15	Pilot, Deep Throat, Squeeze	\$6
#1	\$20	Deep Throat Variant	\$8
#1 2nd Print	\$9	Squeeze Variant	\$8
#1 Wizard Ace edition	\$12		
#2	\$12	<u>Wildstorm/IDW</u>	
#2 2nd Print	\$5	X-Files/30 Days of Night	
#3	\$8	#1- #6	\$5
#3 2nd Print	\$5		
#4	\$7	<u>IDW Publishing</u>	
#4 2nd Print	\$5	The X-Files Season 10	
#5	\$7	#1 Limited Photo Variant	\$8
#20 SDCC Ashcan	\$20	#1 I Want To Believe	\$13
#21 w/card	\$4	#1 Hastings Variant	\$15
#27 - #41	\$4	#1 Tooms	\$14
#33, #40 & #41 Variant Covers	\$5	#1 Convention Edition	\$16
		#1 DF Photo Cover	\$10
The Hero Illustrated Special	\$14	#1 3rd printing	\$5
		#2 Photo Variant	\$6
The X-Files Special Edition		#2 3rd printing	\$5
#1-5	\$6	#3 Photo Cover	\$6
		#4 Limited Photo Variant	\$7
The X-Files Digest		#4 Sharp Brothers	\$12
#1 Photo cover	\$5	#4 Montreal Comic Con	\$15
		#5 Photo cover	\$5



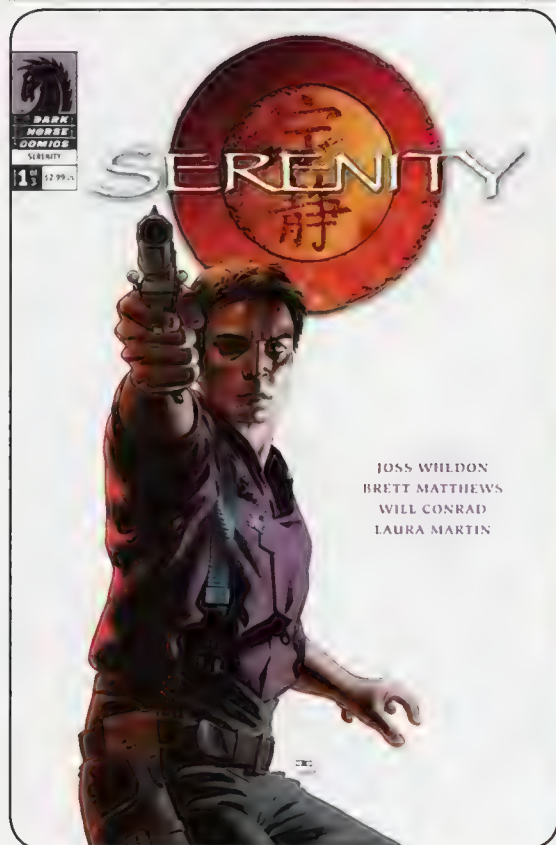
ADVENTURE TIME

SDCC Exclusive Vol 1 HC	\$140
ECCC Exclusive Vol 1 HC	\$36
SDCC Exclusive Vol 2 HC	\$42
ECCC Exclusive Vol 2 HC	\$35
#1 CGC 9.8	\$100
#1 Annapolis CC CGC 9.8	\$100
#1 Chapel Hill Comics	\$45
#1 Candy Caper Variant	\$40
#1 Cover A	\$50

#1 Cover B	\$50
#10 Dynamic Forces Variant	\$27
#11 Marvel Variant CGC 9.8	\$140
#11 Houghton Cover	\$50
#13 Cover C	\$27
#14 Princess Bubblegum Var	\$22
#15 Marceline Vampire Queen	\$40
#16 Phoenix Comic Con	\$25
#21 Detroit Fanfare Variant	\$40



#1 NY Variant CGC 9.8	\$71	Green Lantern	
Superman Unchained		#8 Adams Variant CGC 9.6	\$30
#1 Neal Adams Variant CGC 9.8	\$163		
Batman: Odyssey		Captain America (2011)	
#1 Sketch Variant	\$13	#1 Diamond Toys Var	\$30
#2 Sketch Variant	\$8	JOSS WHEDON	
#3 Sketch Variant	\$6	Stan Lee Meets Spider-Man	
#4 Sketch Variant	\$6	#1	\$40
#5 Sketch Variant	\$6		
Unity		Astonishing X-Men	
#1 Adams Sketch Cover	\$103	Directors Cut CGC 9.6	\$28
All Star Batman & Robin		Giant Size #1 Sketch CGC 9.8	\$30
#8 Blue Joker Variant	\$50	#1 CGC 9.0	\$20
Hunger (Marvel)		#1 Variant CGC 9.8	\$27
#1 Adams Variant	\$35	#2 CGC 9.4	\$20
The Defenders		#2	\$5
#1 Adams Sketch Variant	\$33	Angel: After the Fall	
Amazing Spider-Man		#4 Reailer Incentive CGC 9.8	\$10
#667 Montreal CC Sketch	\$32	Serenity (Dark Horse)	
		#1 Mal Cover	\$7
		#1 Inara Cover	\$5
		#1 California Browncoat Exc	\$22





#2 Shepard Cover	\$5
#2 Quesada Zoe Variant	\$10
Serenity: Float Out (Dark Horse)	
#1	\$10
Serenity: Better Days (Dark Horse)	
#1	\$4
#2	\$4
#3	\$4
Sugarshock (Dark Horse)	
#1	\$9
Fray (Dark Horse)	
#1	\$7
Buffy TVS: Reunion (Dark Horse)	
#2 Photo Cover	\$6
Dollhouse: Epitaph	
One-Shot	\$5

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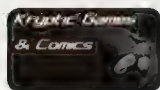
United States & Territories

- Arkham Comics: Blytheville, AR
- Drawn To Comics: Glendale, AZ
- Jesse James Comics & Collectibles: Glendale, AZ
- Ash Avenue Comics & Books: Tempe, AZ
- Collectors Ink: Chico, CA
- Comic Madness: Chino, CA
- Comic Ink: Dublin, CA



Super Heroes In Training: Escondido, CA

- I.E. Comics And Games: Hemet, CA
- The Comic Bug: Manhattan Beach, CA
- Comics & Collectibles: Sacramento, CA
- Yesteryear Comics: San Diego, CA



Earth-2 Comics : Sherman Oaks, CA

- D J's Universal Comics: Studio City, CA
- Comics Toons 'n' Toys: Tustin, CA



Mile High Comics: Denver, CO

- I Want More Comics: Northglenn, CO
- Rogue Comics: Bridgeport, CT
- The Comic Book Shop: Wilmington, DE
- Black Hive Comics And More: Jacksonville, FL
- Famous Faces & Funnies: West Melbourne, FL
- A Comic Shop: Winter Park, FL
- Oxford Comics: Atlanta, GA
- Dr. No's: Marietta, GA
- Dreamland Comics: Bartlett, IL
- Alley Cat Comics: Chicago, IL
- G-Mart: Chicago, IL
- Amazing Fantasy Comic Shop: Frankfort, IL
- Have Fun Collectibles: Moline, IL



Graham Crackers: Naperville, IL

- Beyond Tomorrow: Palatine, IL
- Mellow Blue Planet: Rock Island, IL
- Tims Corner: Rock Island, IL
- Keiths Komix: Schaumburg, IL

- Comic Service: Springfield, IL



Discount Comic Book Service: Fort Wayne, IN

- Creative Comics: Griffith, IN
- Comic Carnival: Indianapolis, IN
- The Great Escape: Louisville, KY
- Comic Vault: Radcliff, KY
- Little Monster Comics: Somerset, KY
- Louisiana Double Play: Baton Rouge, LA
- Smartflix.Com: Arlington, MA
- Friendly Neighborhood Comics: Bellingham, MA



Newbury Comics: Brighton, MA



New England Comics: Brockton, MA

- Larry's Comics: Lowell, MA
- Harrison's Comics & Pop Culture: Woburn, MA



Third Eye Comics: Annapolis, MD

- Outerworld Cards: Eldersburg, MD
- Mighty Kc's: Fallston, MD
- Wonderworld Comics & Games: Taylor, MI
- Comic Book Adventure: Minneapolis, MN
- Source Comics & Games: Roseville, MN
- Newcastle Comics & Games: Maryland Hgts, MO
- Fantasy Shop Inc: St Charles, MO
- Carolina Comics: Chapel Hill, NC
- Atomic Empire: Durham, NC
- Heroes Are Here: Goldsboro, NC
- Classic Comics: Lewisville, NC
- Event Horizon Games: Raleigh, NC
- Ssalefish Comics: Winston Salem, NC
- Krypton Comics: Omaha, NE



Mail Order Comics: Omaha, NE

- Stairway To Heaven Comics: Exeter, NH
- Updog Comics: Plaistow, NH
- Manifest Comics: Bayonne, NJ
- Conquest Comic: Bayville, NJ
- Funny Books, Comics & Stuff: Lake Hiawatha, NJ



A & S Comics: North Bergen, NJ

- Little Shop Of Comics & Cards: Scotch Plains, NJ
- Stormwatch Comics: West Berlin, NJ
- Collector's Kingdom: Huntington Stat, NY
- Blu Planet Entertainment: Massapequa, NY
- The Comix Zone: N. Syracuse, NY
- Forbidden Planet: New York, NY



Midtown Comics: New York, NY

- Comix Warehouse: Pearl River, NY
- All Heroes: Rochester, NY
- Alterniverse : Salt Point, NY
- Atomic Comics : Shirley, NY
- Two Kings Comics: Victor, NY
- Borrero : Yonkers, NY
- Rockin' Rooster: Cincinnati, OH
- Cleveland Comics: Cleveland, OH
- Bell Book & Comic : Dayton, OH
- Carolina Comics: Lawton, OK
- Speeding Bullet Books & Comics: Norman, OK
- All-star Comics: Oklahoma City, OK
- Things From Another World: Milwaukie, OR



The Encounter: Allentown, PA

- Comics World: Chambersburg, PA



New Dimension Comics: Cranberry Twnsp, PA

- Sackers Collectibles: Easton, PA
- Comic Collection: Feasterville, PA
- Ultimate Comics: Hellertown, PA
- Wade's Comic Madness: Levittown, PA
- Ontario Street Comics: Philadelphia, PA
- Duncan Comics Books & Accessories: Pittsburgh, PA
- Rah-coco's: Providence, RI
- Apocalypse Comics: N Myrtle Beach, SC
- Comics Exchange: Knoxville, TN
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- Altered Edge Entertainment: Galax, VA
- Untamed Worlds: Lynchburg, VA
- Four Color Fantasies: Winchester, VA
- Painted Visions Comics & Cards: Woodbridge, VA
- Docking Bay 93: Mt Vernon, WA
- Adventures Underground: Richland, WA
- Rockheads Comics & Games: Kenosha, WI



The Westfield Company: Middleton, WI

- Comic Boy: Fairmont, WV

Canada



Baby Love Products: Camrose, AB

- Comic Fever: Edmonton, AB
- Wizards Comics & Collectibles: Edmonton, AB
- Galaxy Comics & Collectibles: Winnipeg, MB
- Burdin's Comics: Hamilton, ON
- B.A.'s Comics & Nostalgia: London, ON
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- Distribution Universe: St. Laurent, QC

United Kingdom

- Disposable Heroes: Belfast
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- Negative Zone: Newport, Gwent
- Whatever Comics: Canterbury, Kent
- Phoenix Fantasy: Margate, Kent
- Comics N Toys : The Horse Fair, Kidderminster
- Gosh! The London Comic Shop: Berwick Street, London
- A Place In Space: Croydon, London
- Orbital Comics: Great Newport Street, London
- Forbidden Planet: Shaftsbury Avenue, London
- Wallpaper Supplies: Library Street, Wigan

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- Ace Comics & Games: Annerley, Qld, Australia
- Arcadia Unbound: Kingsgrove, Nsw, Australia
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Uber

KIERON GILLEN

illustrated by Gabriel Andrade



Issue #1/2

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